Cross-Movement Coalitions and Political Agency: The Popular Sector and the Pro-Canada/Action Canada Network

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by

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Abstract

Through a historical account of the Pro-Canada/Action Canada Network (PCN/ACN), this dissertation examines coalition formation among social movements. It argues that the complex process of cross-sectoral coalition formation and thus the potential for convergence of social movements can best be understood by combining elements of different analytical frameworks.

This dissertation draws on elements of the two dominant paradigms for the study of social movements, resource mobilization theory and new social movement theory. Specifically, it utilizes the formers' attention to the specifics of organization and structure and the latter's focus on the discursive formation of identities. Both are then combined with the uniquely Canadian but theoretically underdeveloped concept of the popular sector and a neo-gramscian perspective on social formation and mobilization that draws on political economy and class-analytical traditions.

With its formation in 1988 around opposition to the Canada – U.S. Free Trade Agreement, the PCN/ACN was an early example of a broader trend for trade and investment to become key arenas for social and political contention at the turn of the century. This dissertation challenges the assumptions of most analytical frameworks concerning the limits to coalition formation and argues that the nature of the unifying issue is an important determinant of the potential for the growth and deepening of social alliances.

After reviewing the historical conjuncture in which the PCN/ACN emerged, this dissertation traces the history of key sectors and member organizations – labour, women and ecumenical justice – paying specific attention to their approach to political engagement and the issue of free trade. As a result, it establishes the necessary background to understand both the initial basis for unity and the Network's progression beyond a lowest common denominator alliance around a single issue, to a broader mandate.

This dissertation provides empirical evidence on which to judge the potential of social movements to displace other discourses and agencies on the left. Given the contemporary interest in the role of social movements, NGOs and civil society, this dissertation provides some essential signposts for two types of practitioners: academics seeking to understand outcomes and activists hoping to determine them.

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This is an opportunity for me to acknowledge the formative influence both my parents, Hilda and the late Stephen Bleyer, have had on my own life. Their love and support made both this dissertation and much else that has gone before it possible. I am sure the completion of this dissertation would have pleased my father tremendously. I dedicate it to his memory.

Preface

It is "not sociology, but social practice, [which] may decide which theories are correct and which are not," and this is equally true for political science and political practice.[1] This account of the formation and development of the Pro-Canada/ Action Canada Network (PCN/ACN) was undertaken in this spirit. My interest in the questions regarding the prospects for coalitions of social movements posed and examined herein was, in part, a result of having served in a staff position as Coordinator of the PCN between August 1988 and October 1990. Consequently, the research project that led to this dissertation was very much inspired by issues and questions raised by social practice.

The research for this dissertation was gathered after this period of direct involvement in the PCN and thus is not strictly the product of a 'participant-observer' or observation process. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that my personal experience as a participant in a period of the Network's development had an effect on the subsequent research project. Specifically, my experience has served to identify avenues of inquiry and given me access to data that might not have been equally accessible to another researcher. For example, because of the relatively informal approach to record keeping by the Pro-Canada Network itself, data was often obtained from the organizational and personal files of participants. In addition, interviews with these participants served to supplement this data as well as identify other fruitful sources.

In order to address any potential concerns regarding research methodology, I have taken great care to rely on documentary evidence (publications and interviews) to establish the historical record and to substantiate claims and arguments made here. In addition, wherever possible I have made use of multiple sources of evidence in order to enhance "the validity and reliability" of the case study.[2]

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[1] George Ross, "Marxism and the New Middle Classes: French Critiques," *Theory and Society* 5, no. 2 (1978): 189.

[2] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research; Design and Methods* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1994), 96.

Research for this study covered three broad areas each requiring a slightly different emphasis in techniques. In general, I have relied on documentary research and interviews. The historical review of social movement politics and coalition formation in the Canadian context is based on primary sources, for the most part publications and internal documents of the movements and organizations in question and media accounts, as well as secondary sources. The assessment of sectoral approaches to the FTA and coalition politics as well as of the formation of the Pro-Canada Network relied on the publications and records of organizations and groups and some secondary sources. Semi-structured personal interviews with leaders and activists in these organizations were used to confirm and expand on evidence gathered from documentation. Whereas interviews began with a list of specific questions tailored to the experience and expertise of each subject, the opportunity for discussion of a more open-ended nature was always offered and often provided valuable information and insights.

Finally, the political and institutional development of the Network was documented through a review of publications and records from various decision-making bodies, including minutes and reports of meetings. These sources were backed up by information from extensive personal interviews with PCN/ACN participants as well as published media reports. Where necessary, interview data was used to correct gaps in other data sources, notably organizational records.

This account of the unique experience of the Canadian popular sector and the Pro-Canada/Action Canada Network provides empirical evidence on which to judge the potential of social movements to displace other discourses and agencies on the Left. Given the contemporary interest in the role of social movements, NGOs and civil society, it is my sincere hope that this dissertation provides some essential signposts for two types of practitioners: academics seeking to understand outcomes and activists hoping to determine them.

List of Abbreviations

ACN	Action Canada Network
BCNI	Business Council on National Issues
CAFT	Coalition against Free Trade (Ontario)
CAW	Canadian Auto Workers
CBRTGW	Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers
CCC	Canadian Council of Churches
CCCB	Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
CCF	Cooperative Commonwealth Federation
CCL	Canadian Congress of Labour
CCPA	Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
CCU	Confederation of Canadian Unions
CDC	Canada Development Corporation
CDHI	C.D. Howe Institute
CEQ	Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec
CFIB	Canadian Federation of Independent Business
CFS	Canadian Federation of Students
CHC	Canadian Health Coalition
CIC	Committee for an Independent Canada
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CMA	Canadian Manufacturers Association
COC	Council of Canadians
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSN	Confédération des syndicats nationaux
CTC	Citizens Tradewatch Campaign (U.S.)
CTF	Canadian Teachers Federation
CTM	Mexican Workers Confederation
CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees
CUPW	Canadian Union of Postal Workers
CYC	Company of Young Canadians
ECEJ	Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice
FAT	Authentic Labour Front (Mexico)
FFQ	Fédération des Femmes du Québec
FIRA	Foreign Investment Review Agency
FTA	Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement
FTQ	Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GST	Goods and Services Tax
IPE	International Political Economy
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ICHRLA	Interchurch Committee for Human Rights in Latin America
KWS	Keynesian Welfare State
LAWG	Latin American Working Group
MAI	Multilateral Agreement on Investment
NAC	National Action Committee on the Status of Women
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NAPO	National Anti-Poverty Organization
NCCIS	National Committee on the Church in Industrial Society

NDP	New Democratic Party
NEC	National Economic Conference
NEP	National Energy Policy
NFU	National Farmers Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NMT	New Movement Theory
NSMO	New Social Movement Organization
NUPGE	National Union of Public and General Employees
OFL	Ontario Federation of Labour
ONDP	Ontario New Democratic Party
PCI	Italian Communist Party
PCF	French Communist Party
PCN	Pro-Canada Network
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
PRD	Party of the Democratic Revolution (Mexico)
PRI	Party of Institutional Revolution (Mexico)
PSAC	Public Service Alliance of Canada
RCSW	Royal Commission on the Status of Women
RMALC	Mexican Free Trade Action Network
RMT	Resource Mobilization Theory
SAC	Social Affairs Commission
SMO	Social Movement Organization
SMS	Social Movement Sector
SPD	German Social Democratic Party
TICCER	Task Force on Churches and Social Responsibility
TLC	Trades and Labour Congress
TNO	Trade Negotiations Office
TUG	Trade Union Group
UAW	United Auto Workers
UCC	United Church of Canada
UFCW	United Food and Commercial Workers
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
USTR	United States Trade Representative
USWA	United Steelworkers of America (Canada)
VOW	Voice of Women
WCSS	Working Committee for Social Solidarity
WTO	World Trade Organization

Introduction

1. The Shifting Politics of the Left

The growing movement opposing trade liberalization has taken its place at the centre of a second wave of social movements to emerge over the last three decades. During a first wave of global social movement mobilization in the 1960s and 1970s, trade union militancy, anti-war, student, and women's movements in North America and Europe emerged as liberation struggles continued across the Third World. More recently, a dramatic increase in 'extra-parliamentary' and 'extra-political' forms of social engagement has led to an explosion in the number of movements as well as Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) and Non-Governmental Organization's (NGOs) accompanied by ever greater expectations for their potential role.[1]

As Hilary Wainwright has argued, "the social movements of the last twenty-five years...have challenged the monopoly claimed by traditional left parties on the leadership of social and economic change."[2] Moreover it has been suggested that these social movements were, at least in part, reactions to existing left-wing political formations and the practices of these parties when they wielded state power.[3] On the one hand, the revelations of the human toll of Stalinism at the twentieth congress of the CPSU kicked off a mass exodus from Communist Parties in the West. On the other hand, as the postwar boom ended, social democratic parties were increasingly

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[1] Also sometimes referred to as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). See, for example, the data and comments reported in John W. Foster, "Context," in *Whose World is it Anyway? Civil Society, the United Nations and the Multilateral Future*, ed. John W. Foster with Anita Anand (Ottawa: United Nations Association in Canada, 1999); the introduction to Robin Cohen and Shirin M. Rai, eds., *Global Social Movements* (London: The Athlone Press, 2000); and Dieter Rucht, "The Transnationalization of Social Movements: Trends, Causes, Problems," in *Social Movements in a Globalizing World*, ed. Donatella Della Porta, Hanspeter Kriesi and Dieter Rucht (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

[2] Hilary Wainwright, *Arguments for a New Left: Answering the Free-Market Right* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 193.

[3] Gunder Frank and Fuentes suggest this failure of the left was global in scope: "Indeed much of the membership and strength of contemporary social movements is the reflection of people's disappointment and frustration with – and their search for alternatives to – the political process, political parties, the state, and the capture of state power in the West, South and East. The perceived failure of revolutionary, as well as reformist left-wing parties and regimes, in all parts of the world, adequately to express people's protest and to offer viable and satisfying alternatives, has been responsible for much of the popular movement to social movements." André Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes, "Nine Theses on Social Movements," *ifda dossier*, no. 63, January/February (1988), 37-38; on this dynamic in the Canadian context, see Robert Laxer, *Canada's Unions* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1976); in the US, see Richard Flacks, "Think Globally, Act Politically: Some Notes toward New Movement Strategy," in *Cultural Politics and Social Movements*, ed. Marcy Darnovsky, Barbara Leslie Epstein, and Richard Flacks (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

seen as unresponsive to popular demands since, in practice, they were reduced to crisis management when in power.[4]

Meanwhile, attempts at a "structural reformist" strategy, both from within a rejuvenated 'Eurocommunist' movement and by socialist parties, were doomed to failure. Explicit attempts to break out of the crisis management model – most notably the French Socialist Party led to power by François Mitterand in 1981 – met with little success during the 1980s.[5] In the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Communist parties either disbanded or were renamed. During this period most of the major European social democratic parties were beginning to move to more centrist positions following serious and serial electoral defeats, tough left-wing challenges within, and the emergence of new Green and radical left parties without during the 1980s.[6]

This phenomenon was not limited to the political left. Indeed, increased social movement activity during this period took place while political party systems across the western democracies entered into various stages of crisis marked, among other things, by significant decline in voter participation, party membership and party activism.[7] In Canada, the crisis in party politics included their reduced role in

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[4] Leo Panitch, "The Impasse of Social Democratic Politics," in *Socialist Register 1985/1986*, ed. Ralph Miliband and John Saville (London: Merlin, 1986); George Ross and Jane Jenson, "Post-War Class Struggle and the Crisis of Left Politics," in *Socialist Register 1985/6*, ed. Ralph Miliband, et al. (London: Merlin, 1985).

[5] On the Mitterand case, see Daniel Singer, *Is Socialism Doomed?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[6] On the rise of Green and other alternative left parties, see the contributions to Ferdinand Mueller-Rommel, ed., *New Politics in Western Europe: The Rise & Success of Green Parties and Alternative Lists* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989) as well as Werner Hulsberg, *The German Greens: A Social and Political Profile* (London: Verso, 1988) and Dick Richardson and Chris Rootes, eds., *The Green Challenge: The Development of Green Parties in Europe* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995). On the state of European left parties in the early 1990s, see the contributions to Perry Anderson and Patrick Camiller, eds., *Mapping the West European Left* (London: Verso, 1994).

[7] A comparison of nineteen OECD states shows a decline in turnout averaging 10 percent from the 1950s to the 1990s. Wattenberg points to waning partisan loyalty and party membership as causes. Martin Wattenberg, "The Decline of Party Mobilization," in *Parties without Partisans*, ed. Russell J. Dalton and Martin Wattenberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). See also Russell J. Dalton and Manfred Kuechler, eds., *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies, Europe and the International Order* (London: Polity Press, 1990); Kay Lawson and Peter Merkl, *When Parties Fail* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988); Mark Gray and Miki Caul, "Declining voter turnout in advanced industrial democracies, 1950 to 1997: The effects of declining group mobilization," *Comparative Political Studies* 33, no. 9 (2000).

"structuring the vote, mobilizing mass opinion, aggregating interest and shaping public policy and organization of government," as well as in a dramatic increase in partisan volatility.[8] Here as elsewhere, leaders have overshadowed their parties, whether in policy formation or in campaigning, while new electoral techniques and technology have also contributed to making grassroots party activism less relevant. Both the concentration of power in the hands of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) at the expense of Parliament, and the Byzantine process of intergovernmental decision-making driven by a loose federal structure where substantial powers are held by the provincial governments – two defining characteristics of 'executive federalism' – have also been seen as undermining political participation.[9]

While there is a general acknowledgement that political parties have undergone fundamental change, the notion that this is best described as a *decline* has been challenged. From this perspective, the professionalization of mass-based parties is seen as signalling a transformation rather than indicating a decline. For example, in their description of "Political Parties as Campaign Organizations," Webb and Farrell relate this dynamic to the rise of social movements since, "fewer individuals now enact political roles as loyal party members, preferring instead to participate via non-partisan single-issue groups." They add, "it might also be tempting to conclude that parties are in decline in another sense, i.e., that they are increasingly unprincipled, opportunistic power-seekers who will fail to offer voters clear or meaningful choices."[10] Hirst sums up the situation as follows:

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[8] Khayyam Zev Paltiel, "Political Marketing, Party Finance, and the Decline of Canadian Parties," in *Canadian Politics in Transition*, ed. Brian A. Tanguay and Alain G. Gagnon (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1996), 403; volatility is assessed in Harold D. Clarke et al., *Absent Mandate: Interpreting Change in Canadian Elections*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Gage, 1991).

[9] In Canada, John Meisel has advanced this thesis. See John Meisel, "The Decline of Party," in *Party Politics In Canada*, ed. Hugh Thorburn (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1991), 181. He provides an extensive catalogue of short, medium and long term causes for this decline. In addition to those noted above these include an increasingly bureaucratic state, the rise of interest groups, corporatism, the role of the electronic media, investigative journalism, opinion polling, the power of dominant economic interests and 'third party' spending. On the impact of technology, see also R.K. Carty, "Three Canadian Party Systems: An Interpretation of the Development of National Politics," in *Party Democracy in Canada*, ed. George Perlin (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall, 1988), 24-28.

[10] Paul Webb and David M. Farrell, "Political Parties as Campaign Organizations," (Centre for the Study of Democracy, UC Irvine 1998), 22.

> If the participation of citizens in modern mass democracies is limited then, on the contrary, the role of the major political parties is excessive... Mass democracy may be a minimal form of political participation for the individual, but it gives the major parties the capacity to monopolize the mainstream political agenda. The major parties survive and, even if they do not prosper, they occupy political space.[11]

Unlike their European counterparts, Canada's major political parties did not evolve along class lines but rather developed as what have been defined as brokerage parties or "similar organizations opportunistically appealing to a variety of interests."[12] Even Canada's social democratic party, the New Democratic Party (NDP), formed as a common endeavour of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and the largest labour federation, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), in 1961, was unable to fully break out of this mould. Furthermore, postwar affluence and Cold War hysteria, both particularly acute in North America, coloured the formative period of the CCF/NDP. As a result, the party evolved with strong ties to the Canadian labour movement but bearing a rather weak variant of social democratic reformism.[13]

While economic crisis gripped the West as a whole in the early 1970s, in Canada it took on a particular character. A continentalist postwar development model ensured that the Canadian economy was overwhelmingly integrated with the United States and that the Keynesian demand management tools at the state's disposal were rather less than more effective.[14] The wave of social movement mobilization, industrial militancy and nationalist ferment that marked the transition from boom to economic downturn generated a left-nationalist challenge to the NDP's centrist leadership. The Waffle, as it became known, was eventually rooted out of the party

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[11] Paul Hirst, *Representative Democracy and its Limits* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 4.

[12] See Chapter 1 in Jeanine Brodie and Jane Jenson, *Crisis, Challenge and Change* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1988). Tanguay links the brokerage model to the 'decline of party' thesis in "Canada's Party System in the 1990s: Breakdown or Renewal?" in *Canadian Politics*, ed. James Bickerton and Alain G. Gagnon (Toronto: Broadview Press, 1999), 331. The brokerage party model increases the importance of individual leaders and contributes to the poverty of ideological debate in the political realm – both key factors associated with this thesis.

[13] See Chapter 8 in Jeanine Brodie and Jane Jenson, *Crisis, Challenge and Change* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1988).

[14] Jane Jenson, "Representations in Crisis: the Roots of Canada's Permeable Fordism," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* XXIII, no. 4 (1990).

through the combined efforts of the leadership and the international (i.e., U.S.-based) trade unions. The Waffle episode became an important point of reference for future debates on political agency on the Canadian Left. As the title of a newspaper column put it at the time, "Waffle Sharpens Old NDP Dilemma: Is it Political Party or Movement?"[15] The group's expulsion in 1972 reinforced the critique of the limits of party and specifically social democratic party politics.[16]

By 1981 the Canadian economy was in the hold of a full-fledged recession. Following two doomed attempts at economic intervention and facing an increasingly vocal and organized corporate sector, the Canadian government appointed a Royal Commission to divine a way out of the impasse. The Royal Commission on the Economic Union and the Development Prospects for Canada (Macdonald Commission), both through its process and its conclusions, underlined the increasingly dramatic gulf between the perspectives of a range of social movements and organizations and the corporate sector. While relationships, both organizational and personal, were already developing between labour, women's, church, farm and other groups, the Macdonald Commission's eventual prescription of privatization, deregulation and free trade provided the critical impetus for the forging of what has become known as the "popular sector."[17]

At the urging of a corporate sector seeking to enhance profitability, the Commission made itself the bearer of a neo-liberal response to the crisis. The Commission's challenge that Canadians take "a leap of faith" on bilateral free trade with the U.S. was taken up both by the state and the corporate sector as the centrepiece of a new model of development.[18] Meanwhile, free trade became the focus around which the popular sector would build the Pro-Canada Network, a

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[15] Peter Regenstrief, "Waffle Sharpens Old NDP Dilemma: Is it Political Party or Movement?" *Toronto Star*, 21 April 1971.

[16] See, for example, the argument proposed in Gregory Albo, "The 20th Anniversary of the Waffle - Canada, Left-Nationalism and Younger Voices," *Studies in Political Economy*, no. 33 (1990).

[17] Daniel Drache and Duncan Cameron, eds., *The Other MacDonald Report* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1985).

[18] *Report of the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Developmental Prospects for Canada* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1985).

structured alliance of movements. This would develop before the end of the decade, creating a new and different challenge to the social democratic model for political agency.

2. Introducing the Pro-Canada/Action Canada Network

In April 1987, groups opposed to proposals for a Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) came together to form the Pro-Canada Network (PCN). Within two years, the PCN had developed a broad membership base of more than thirty national organizations and member coalitions in nine of ten Canadian provinces. Under the Network's banner, these groups campaigned against the proposed FTA in the run-up to the 1988 federal election where it proved to be the central issue of debate. After the election resulted in a renewed majority government for the Progressive Conservative Party, the only federal party backing the FTA, the agreement was signed and then enacted in January 1989.

Despite clear defeat on the issue around which it had been formed, the Pro-Canada Network did not fold. In fact, the Network moved beyond an initial 'single-issue' focus to a unity rooted in first identifying and then opposing a broad social and economic agenda. As a result, the PCN engaged in campaigns on a series of issues and, as its base and discourse broadened and the scope of its activities became more ambitious, flirted with more permanent status.

Along the way the Network overcame a number of important hurdles beginning with participation in the 1988 Federal Election and a re-mandating process immediately thereafter. With a broader mandate defined with free trade as the centrepiece, the PCN campaigned against the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and a string of neo-liberal policies targeting social programs. As it engaged a series of issues, the Network employed a variety of tactics, adapted its structure and increased its resource base and staff complement.

In response to proposals to extend trade liberalization across the North American continent, the Network developed working relationships with Mexican and

American counterparts leading to a cross-national campaign to oppose the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The April 1991 renaming of the Network as the Action Canada Network was an attempt to present the cross-movement coalition in a more positive light to its North American counterparts as well as respond to a growing consensus on Canadian constitutional issues among member organizations.

As part of its NAFTA effort and in dealing with issues like the GST as well as its intervention in the Canadian constitutional debate, the PCN/ACN further developed a common discourse across various movements. While most efforts remained committed to defensive struggles, the Network also began to articulate and advance policy alternatives.

During its first five years the Pro-Canada Network exceeded the expectations of most observers, formed on the basis of different analytical perspectives, as well as the hopes of most participants, based on their activist experience. Whether from a traditional pluralist, rational choice or class-analytical perspective, the Network was generally viewed as a momentary phenomenon whose unity would dissolve in conjunction with an electoral resolution to the free trade debate in 1988. For social movement activists, previous experience of the difficulty in maintaining a coalition of groups around one specific issue laid the basis for relatively limited expectations for the PCN.

Over the longer run these initial outlooks were borne out as the Network showed signs of definite decline. Beginning in 1992-93, decreased participation and a reduced scale of involvement diminished the scope of the ACN's activities. The Network became progressively less relevant to its own member groups as well as on the broader political stage. In 1998, the ACN was downgraded to an informal information-sharing network with extremely limited resources and no campaigning mandate and was renamed the Solidarity Network.

Social, political and economic developments, both Canadian and global, have conspired to amplify the relevance of the story of the Pro-Canada/Action Canada

Network. Much as the 1989 FTA became a model for a series of bilateral and multilateral agreements targeting the liberalization of trade and investment, the PCN was a Canadian innovation and possibly a global first. Beyond the obvious interest of an expansive cross-movement coalition that defies most predictions by achieving a broad basis of unity and approaching some degree of permanence, the Network was a precursor of the global trend for trade and investment policy to become key arenas for social and political contestation.

Over the last decade, campaigns and movements opposed to trade and investment liberalization have sprung up on all continents. Some of these movements have also been at the forefront of coalition building both domestically and on a transnational basis. The most spectacular examples to date of international collaboration by these movements have been the successful campaign to oppose the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) in 1997, followed by the mobilization around the WTO Seattle Round.[19]

3. Arguments

Neither the trials of social democratic and other left parties nor the enthusiasm for civil society – under whatever nomenclature – were entirely new phenomena by the 1980s and 1990s.[20] Political agency has been at the centre of debate on the Left through the twentieth century. Since the 1960s, arguments have focused on the nature

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[19] Madeleine Drohan, "How the Net Killed the MAI," *Globe and Mail*, 29 April 1998, A7; Stephen J. Kobrin, "The MAI and the Clash of Globalizations," *Foreign Policy*, no. 109 (1998); Peter Bleyer, "The Other Battle in Seattle," *Studies in Political Economy*, no. 62 (2000); Mary Kaldor, "'Civilizing' Globalization? The Implications of the 'Battle in Seattle,'" *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 1 (2000); Peter J. Smith and Elizabeth Smythe, "Globalization, Citizenship and Technology: the MAI meets the Internet," *Canadian Foreign Policy* 7, no. 2 (1999).

[20] The term 'civil society' has a long pedigree; its use here reflects more contemporary interpretations. Civil society has re-emerged, first, in opposition Eastern European party/states in the 1970s and 1980s and, second, as a description of a sphere of collective activity that is autonomous from the state. In both instances, the revival of the term has included "the broadening of the terrain on which politics could be conducted." Philip Resnick, *Twenty First Century Democracy* (Montreal: McGill Queens University Press, 1997), 101. Although the scope of 'civil society' varies substantially depending on the definition, social movements are generally viewed as among its central actors. See, in particular, the introduction to John Keane, ed. *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives* (London: Verso, 1988) as well as his *Democracy and Civil Society* (London: Verso, 1988); Paul Hirst, *Representative Democracy and its Limits* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990); and Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, "Social Movements, Civil Society and the Problem of Sovereignty," *Praxis International* 4, October (1984).

and efficacy of working class-based political vehicles and the potential of emerging new social movements. Nevertheless, there is now a new momentum and energy behind this debate on political agency and specifically the significance of these movements for the future of democratic governance.

The Pro-Canada Network is an important example of coalition formation among social movements – a contemporary form of the alliance politics long practiced by the Left. There have been relatively few empirical studies of coalitions of social movements and even less attention has been paid to specifically cross-movement coalitions or to evaluating claims and counterclaims concerning the ability of these projects to move beyond the limits of single-issue concerns.[21] These are critical pursuits if we are to evaluate the potential for social movement coalitions to challenge the political party's exclusive claim to the function of interest aggregation. Moreover, the potential of these coalitions to form projects bearing alternative discourses and their capacity to bring about social transformation is also in question.

This account of the formation and development of the Pro-Canada/Action Canada Network is therefore a contribution to a broader consideration of the crisis of political agency on the Left and, more precisely, the potential role of a convergence of social movements. It also informs the wide-ranging contemporary debate on the role of civil society – both national and transnational: what can we glean about the highly touted potential of civil society, and its "strong bid to displace the discourse of class on the left," from this example of a social movement coalition in action?[22]

The following arguments will be examined in the course of this research.

First, cross-movement or cross-sectoral coalitions on the model of the PCN/ACN are an interesting, innovative and hopeful experiment in the redefinition of political agency on the Left that, by themselves, remain inadequate.[23] By inference, these coalitions are unlikely to generate a counterhegemonic project – i.e., a political

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[21] I review this literature in Chapter 2.

[22] Leo Panitch, "Reflections on a Strategy for Labour," in *Working Classes: Global Realities*, ed. Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, *Socialist Register* (London: Merlin Press, 2001), 367.

[23] The terms 'cross-movement' and 'cross-sectoral' are used interchangeably herein.

force capable of enacting a transformative shift in power leading to a new social order.

Second, the successful uniting of diverse constituencies under the banner of the Pro-Canada Network was greatly assisted by the nature of the free trade issue. Specifically, the FTA carried serious policy implications for a wide range of constituencies. Furthermore, the agreement crystallized a broader socio-economic agenda providing a single focal point for contestation by groups with a range of grievances. It also created a firm basis for the eventual formalization of cooperation and for a broader common agenda and discourse.

Third, the FTA was a propitious basis for unity that emerged at a fertile moment in the development of a collaborative environment among Canadian social movements and their organizations. This emerging popular sector was, in turn, marked by the ideological commitment of important elements within it to an alternative, or at the very least a complement, to social democratic electoralism as political agency. This history was a critical determinant of the Network's ability to move relatively seamlessly beyond its original single-issue mandate.

Fourth, and finally, like the emergence of the FTA as the centrepiece of a continentalist neo-liberal strategy, the development of the popular sector was the cumulative result of a series of political responses to the transition from an economic model in crisis. In both cases the importance of economic structures is reaffirmed.

4. Shaping a Theoretical Framework

Mirroring the arguments set out above, this study argues for a synthesis of a variety of analytical approaches in order to apply their different strengths to the case of the Pro-Canada/Action Canada Network. Because both the rise and the eventual decline of the Network are attributed to a combination of structural, instrumental and conjunctural factors, this synthesis requires balancing attention to structure with a focus on agency. In addition, it must also be able to draw out the interaction between agency and structure in the critical process of identity formation, as well as

accounting for the importance of consciousness or ideological disposition, on the one hand, and organizational process and form, on the other.

Many theoretical arguments have focused on the potential and limitations of social movements. The very definition of a social movement, particularly contrasted with the political party and the interest group, has been the subject of continuing debate. In this context, the notion that contemporary movements constitute a qualitatively new phenomenon (i.e., 'New Social Movements') has been posed.

Prior to the late 1960s two broad theoretical and normative perspectives dominated the study of social movements. With its assumptions of a neutral state and equal access to power within society, the liberal pluralist paradigm emphasized the marginality of protest and questioned the ability of social movements to enter and effectively act within the political realm.[24] Meanwhile, Marxist class analysis developed in tandem with a labour movement that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century as the "paradigm of a social movement."[25] For Marxists, the working class in various guises was the chosen historical agent for social change.

The upsurge in social movement mobilization in the 1960s led to reactions against the traditional analytical perspectives whose explanatory potential seemed unable to cope with these new developments. Within the pluralist paradigm, Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) emerged as a challenge to the dominant social-psychological approaches to collective behaviour. The different theoretical perspectives that have come to be considered under the rubric of RMT refute the classical definition of social movements as products of dysfunctional or irrational collective behaviour. A veritable explosion of RMT-style theorization has taken place over the last twenty years. The focus on organizational forms and activities is reflected in concepts such as the Social Movement Organization (SMO) and Social

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[24] Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970); A. Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1959); and Neil J. Smelser, *The Theory of Collective Behaviour* (New York: Free Press, 1962).

[25] Tom Bottomore, *Political Sociology*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 30.

Movement Sector (SMS) as well as in a focus on 'social networks.'[26] A distinct 'political process' model within RM theory points to the shifting political environment – defined as the "political opportunity structure" – as determining the emergence and success of social movements.[27] The elaboration of "collective action framing" stands out among some of the more recent developments within RMT.[28]

Similarly, the emergence of the student, women's, anti-racist, peace and environmental movements sowed the seeds for a reaction against the orthodox Marxist view of collective action. Class analysis queried the salience of the social cleavages represented by these movements and their ability to undertake transformative political projects without linkages to the 'old' labour movement. New Movement Theory (NMT) challenged the privileging of class and therefore the primacy of the working class, and thus the labour movement, as agency for social change. Exponents of NMT have tended to focus their attention on the cultural identity and discourses of movements and, for the most part, have underlined the particularism of contemporary movements.[29] A discourse-theoretical variant of NMT, whose most prominent exponents are Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, is of particular interest for this account of the PCN/ACN. Laclau and Mouffe deal explicitly, if ultimately unsatisfactorily, with the question of political agency as well

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[26] On SMO's and SMS's, see, among others, Mayer N. Zald and John McCarthy, eds., *Social Movements in an Organizational Society* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1987) and Mayer N. Zald and John McCarthy, eds., *The Dynamics of Social Movements* (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop, 1979).

[27] For an elaboration of the political process model, see Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley, 1978); on the structure of political opportunities, see Sidney Tarrow, "Struggle, Politics and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements, and Cycles of Protest," *Cornell Studies in International Affairs* Western Societies Papers No.21 (1989).

[28] Snow et al. define a frame as an "interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there'." David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest," in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, ed. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 137. See also David A. Snow et al., "Frame Alignment Process, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986).

[29] Alberto Melucci, *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); Jürgen Habermas, "New Social Movements," *Telos*, no. 49, Fall (1981); Alain Touraine, *Return of the Actor: Social Theory in Post-industrial Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988) and Alain Touraine, "Social Movements: Special Area or Central Problem in Sociological Analysis?" *Thesis Eleven* 9, July (1984).

as broaching the issue of movement convergence. Moreover, their discourse-theoretical framework has been influential both in intellectual and political terms.[30]

The study of social movements followed a somewhat distinctive evolutionary course in Canada. While the liberal pluralism that dominated the field in the United States was influential, its ascendancy was mitigated by the importance of a domestic political economy tradition. Hence social movements were for the most part considered as "political reflexes of structural contradictions defined at an economic level."[31] Descent et al. argue that the privileged approach for analyzing social movements in Canada was eventually constituted by a combination of political economy and resource mobilization approaches and included substantial resistance to European (i.e., NMT) perspectives.[32]

Despite its characterization in much of the NMT literature, socialist consideration of political agency has never been limited to its more orthodox variants. This diversity is reflected in the participatory democratic inclination of pre-Marxist utopian socialists, as well as the range of perspectives articulated by Marxist critics of Lenin's dominant perspective on class and agency through the early twentieth century. Most notably, the work of Antonio Gramsci spawned a body of 'neo-Gramscian' theorizing across a number of disciplines beginning in the 1970s. Frameworks built around key Gramscian concepts have been particularly prominent in the fields of International Political Economy (IPE) and Cultural Studies.[33] In the

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[30] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1985); Chantal Mouffe, "Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Toward a New Concept of Democracy," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Nelson and Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1988); Chantal Mouffe, "Radical Democracy or Liberal Democracy?" *Socialist Review*, no. 2 (1990); Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, "Post-Marxism Without Apologies," *New Left Review*, no. 166, November-December (1987).

[31] William K. Carroll, "Social Movements and Counterhegemony in a Canadian Context," in *Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice*, ed. William K. Carroll (Toronto: Garamond, 1992), 3.

[32] David Descent et al., *Classes sociales et mouvements sociaux au Québec et au Canada* (Montréal: Éditions Saint-Martin, 1989), 59. The notion that English Canadian theorizing of social movements was overwhelmingly hostile to the influence of New Movement Theory would be difficult to support only very few years later. See for example contributions to Carroll, "Social Movements and Counterhegemony in a Canadian Context." Laclau and Mouffe's discourse-theoretical approach became particularly influential.

[33] In IPE, see for example Robert W. Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay on Method," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 12, no. 2 (1983) and Robert W. Cox, "Social

latter discipline, Stuart Hall is widely regarded as the primary initiator of the turn to Gramsci. Hall employed Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' to characterize political domination as contested and uncertain as well as broadening its scope to include all of social and cultural life. Hall subsequently became a prominent exponent of an analysis of neo-liberalism in the UK (i.e., 'Thatcherism') that was influential and controversial due its strategic implications for left political strategy.[34] A neo-Gramscian perspective has also been applied to the study of social movements, largely as a critical response to traditional class-analytical perspectives and New Movement Theory.[35] In the Canadian context, a neo-Gramscian perspective has been proposed as a corrective to the prevailing political economy tradition and its lack of attention to social identity and political agency.[36]

Together, the review of analytical frameworks and the account of the PCN/ACN that follow jointly reinforce the case for a synthetic theoretical approach to cross-movement coalition formation. For the investigation of specific actors – social movements and their organizations – the valuable micro-level organizational focus of resource mobilization theory needs to be supplemented by attention to political discourse. This is necessary to fully understand cross-movement relationships and to determine the extent of convergence between movements. Clearly it is also essential if a more normative assessment of counterhegemonic potential is to be attempted.

Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 2 (1981).

[34] See *inter alia* Stuart Hall, "The Great Moving Right Show," in *The Politics of Thatcherism*, ed. Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1983); Stuart Hall, "Gramsci and Us," in *The Hard Road to Renewal*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Verso, 1988); Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, eds., *The Politics of Thatcherism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1983); Stuart Hall, "Authoritarian Populism: A Reply to Jessop et al.," *New Left Review*, no. 151 (1985); Bob Jessop, "Authoritarian Populism, Two Nations, and Thatcherism," *New Left Review*, no. 147 (1984); Bob Jessop et al., "Thatcherism and the Politics of Hegemony: A Reply to Stuart Hall," *New Left Review*, no. 153 (1985); Stuart Hall, "Thatcherism a New Stage?" *Marxism Today*, February 1980; Stuart Hall, "Face the Future," *New Socialist*, September 1984.

[35] See for example Carl Boggs, *Social Movements and Political Power* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 70s and 80s* (University of California Press, 1991); Barbara Epstein, "Rethinking Social Movement Theory," *Socialist Review*, no. 1 (1990).

[36] For a strong statement of the weakness of the political economy approach in its consideration of agency, see Albo, "The 20th Anniversary of the Waffle - Canada, Left-Nationalism and Younger Voices." Carroll and Ratner's study of the B.C. Solidarity Coalition employs a neo-Gramscian approach. See William K. Carroll and Robert S. Ratner, "Social Democracy, Neo-Conservatism and Hegemonic Crisis in British Columbia," *Critical Sociology* 16, no. 1 (1989).

At the macro-level, while the political process model within RMT provides a focus on the relationship between social movements and the political system, political economy maintains its importance for the explanation of broader structural context. A neo-Gramscian approach places due emphasis on issues related to agency, including identity formation and consciousness without abstracting these from the broader material conditions. Finally, the uniquely Canadian description 'popular sector,' which has been used to characterize the network of social movements and organizations that was drawn together in the 1980s, has the potential to draw together many of the strengths of these different analytical perspectives in one conceptual package. Overall, this framework should avoid becoming imprisoned in the range of dualisms – i.e., movement/institution, state/civil society, reform/revolution, etc. – that have tended to encumber pluralist, RMT, NMT and some class-analytical perspectives while, at the same time, balancing attention to macro and micro levels, agency and structure.

5. Methodology and Structure

Alliances and coalitions of different types and forms have often been elements of the Left's response to crisis. After reviewing the record of class, party and movement alliances, the first chapter proceeds with an overview of the specific conjuncture that gave rise to the Pro-Canada Network. It focuses specifically on the developing economic crisis and various political responses including, most importantly, the development of the popular sector.

The second chapter turns to the task of constructing a theoretical framework equipped to interpret the PCN/ACN. It begins with a review of different theoretical perspectives on social movements and, more specifically, coalition formation among movements, culminating in an attempt to equip an analytical toolbox tailored to the needs of the Canadian experience of social movement coalition building.

In order to provide the necessary background for understanding the formation of the PCN, the next chapter follows three movements that were instrumental in this process: labour, women and ecumenical justice. By reviewing their approaches to,

first, political engagement and movement coalition building in particular, and second, to the policy issue of Canada-U.S. free trade, this chapter completes the picture begun with the outline of the parameters of structural crisis and the political responses to that crisis set out in Chapter 1.

The three subsequent chapters (4, 5 and 6) are dedicated to the case study of the Pro-Canada Network itself. Chapter 4 documents the formation of the Network culminating with its participation in the 1988 federal election campaign. Chapter 5 pays particular attention to a critical moment in the PCN's development – its re-mandating in the wake of the election campaign – and continues to follow the Network as its activities expand beyond the initial focus on free trade. Chapter 6 picks up the thread as the PCN continues to expand and simultaneously returns to free trade as NAFTA comes onto the agenda. This chapter highlights the Network's renaming as the Action Canada Network (ACN) in April 1991, its substantial engagement in the constitutional debate in 1992, as well as shifts to cross-national activity and the development and promotion of alternative policy around NAFTA. Finally, in this chapter the seeds of the Network's eventual decline are identified.

With the objective of understanding how the Network moved so rapidly from success to an apparent fall from grace, Chapter 7 returns to review the entire development of the ACN/PCN with a specific focus on some key themes.

Chapter 1

The Politics of the Crisis

1. Introduction

This first chapter explores the background to the Pro-Canada Network's coming into being. Beginning with an overview of the place of alliances and coalitions in the politics of the Canadian and broader Western Left allows continuities and differences with the specific case of the Pro-Canada Network to be established. A review of the conjuncture and social formation – in effect, the parameters of the crisis – out of which the Network emerged, provides the background necessary for these differences to be understood. The chapter's focus then shifts to the politics of the crisis including responses by the state and capital and, most importantly, the shaping of the popular sector. Tracing the development of the popular sector reveals the contemporary roots of social movement coalition building as well as a nascent focus on bilateral free trade, the two central elements in the formation of the Pro-Canada Network. This chapter provides some of the key building blocks for a framework that will help us to understand both the rise and the roots of the eventual decline of the Pro-Canada/Action Canada Network.

2. Coalitions and the Politics of the Left

The consideration of alliances, coalitions, and more recently the convergence of movements, has been at the centre of vigorous theoretical and strategic debate on the Left. Theory and strategy have been well intertwined since, in the quest for a sociological and political majority, socialist and social democratic politics have more often than not been about the consideration of alliances and coalitions, from the most superficial level of parliamentary and electoral alignments to more substantial attempts at class alliances.

The construction of unity either in theory or in practice has been driven by two independent though interrelated rationales. First, tactical and strategic alliances are put forward as a means for winning power in the face of apparently increasingly poor odds and capitalism's unexpected resilience. Second, unity is viewed as necessary in

the face of common and highly virulent enemies. Przeworski expresses the electoralist version of the first dilemma in this way:

> The combination of minority status with majority rule constitutes the historical condition under which socialists have to act. This objective condition imposes upon socialists parties a choice: socialists must choose between a party homogeneous in its class appeal, but sentenced to perpetual electoral defeats, and a party that struggles for electoral success at the cost of diluting its class character.[1]

For Gunder Frank and Fuentes the identification of common fearsome enemies is a key and determining ingredient in the mobilization of unity:

> [B]oth the opportunities for coalition and the massiveness and strength of social mobilization are probably enhanced when people perceive that they must defend themselves against these enemies.[2]

Eduard Bernstein set the groundwork for modern European social democracy. In his theoretical revision of class theory, Bernstein argued, among other things, for a parliamentary alliance with the liberal middle class and the peasantry to bring about a gradual democratic transformation of capitalism. This strategy for constituting an electoral majority for socialism was rooted in Bernstein's rejection of the inevitability of capitalist crisis and the impoverishment of the middle class.[3] The German SPD eventually adopted it during the Weimar period, as did most social democratic parties after 1917.

Facing the rise of fascism, yet another form of coalition or alliance building was put forward as a strategic response on the Left. Pioneered on the French Left, the *Front populaire* saw the Communist and Socialist parties agreeing to a Unity program in 1934. Later, after it was joined by the centrist Radical Party, the *Front populaire* swept into office. Taking its lead from French developments and following Stalin's directives for the defence of the Soviet Union and 'socialism in one country' against fascism, the Communist International officially adopted the popular front tactic.

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[1] Adam Przeworski, "Social Democracy as a Historical Phenomenon," *New Left Review*, no. 122 (1980): 39.

[2] André Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes, "Nine Theses on Social Movements," *ifda dossier*, no. 63, January/February (1988): 43.

[3] Eduard Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism* (New York: Schocken, 1961); Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism; Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx* (New York.: Columbia University Press, 1952).

> [T]he core of the Popular Front strategy was unity. It was a set of concentric circles of unity: at its center the United Front of the working class movement, which in turn formed the basis of an even broader anti-fascist People's Front.[4]

This strategy did not gain unanimous support on the European Left. Critics ranged from George Orwell who imagined the "nauseous spectacle of bishops, Communists, cocoa magnates, publishers, duchesses and Labour MP's marching arm in arm to the tune of *Rule Britannia*" to the Trotskyist Left Opposition.[5] Whereas Trotsky himself had, as early as 1933, advocated the 'united front' of the Left as a tactic in the war against fascism, he opposed the "diluting of an energetic working class response" in the broader cross-class alliance represented by the popular front.[6]

In the aftermath of the Second World War, American pluralist social scientists identified a burgeoning middle class as a new, moderate political centre and consequently the key to American capitalism's stability. During the 1950s this analysis was exported to Europe where it influenced the German SPD's revisionist awakening at its Bad Godesberg conference in 1959, and to England forming the basis for a series of sociological treatises used to support similar strategic changes within the British Labour Party in the wake of a crushing electoral defeat in the same year. The embourgeoisement thesis argued that Labour's traditional working class base was being eroded by an increasingly affluent society. While the sociological argument did not go unchallenged, the political logic generated a spate of literature and its own momentum.[7] Abrams, Crosland and others drew strategic conclusions from the basic

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[4] Eric Hobsbawm, "Forty Years of Popular Front Governments," *Marxism Today*, July 1976, 23.

[5] George Orwell quoted in John Coombes, "British Intellectuals and the Popular Front," in *Class, Culture and Social Change*, ed. Frank Glovesmith (Sussex: Harvester, 1980), 72.

[6] Leon Trotsky, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971); On the popular front and social movements in Canada in the 1930s, see Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left 1920-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1989).

[7] See for example John Westergaard, "The Withering Away of Class," in *Towards Socialism*, ed. Perry Anderson and Robin Blackburn (London: Fontana, 1965); John Westergaard and Henrietta Resler, *Class in a Capitalist Society: a Study of Contemporary Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1975); and John Goldthorpe, *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). A long tradition of sociological analysis that attempts to draw causal linkages between changes in class structure and the decreasing strength of the labour movement has played a dominant role in debates of the Western left. Comparing wave after wave of these theorizations, Cronin notes, for example, the similarities between Laclau and Mouffe's NMT argumentation (see Chapter 2 below) and the embourgeoisement thesis that drove social democratic moderation in the postwar period. James E. Cronin, *Labour and Society in Britain 1918-1979* (London: Batsford Academic and Educational, 1984), 9. Cronin concludes elsewhere that: "[t]hough the labels attached to the analysis have shifted it

premise that class was losing its salience as a socio-economic category.[8] The central political goal of the revisionist project was to expunge Clause Four, which included a commitment to common ownership of the means of production, from the Labour Party's constitution in an effort to moderate it and gain popular support.[9]

During this same period the Communist Parties of Western Europe were undergoing their own process of theoretical and strategic change. The exposure of Stalinist crimes, the Eastern European revolts and the rise of East-West détente, combined with an assessment of changes in social structure in postwar capitalism, led to the gradual development of Eurocommunism out of popular frontism.[10] The Italian Communist Party (PCI) was the first to venture down this path with a series of organizational changes beginning in the 1940s culminating in Enrico Berlinger's enunciation of the '*compromesso istorico*' in 1973. By accepting the challenge of electoralism, the Italian, Spanish and French parties all accepted alliances as both possible and necessary. The PCI's *compromesso istorico* led to that party supporting the Christian Democrats in power while the PCF eventually developed a common program with the French Socialist Party. At the level of class analysis these parties developed theoretical justifications for their new strategic direction. For the PCF, state monopoly capitalist theory was, as Althusser called it, "a theory made to order."[11] It articulated the PCF's new political project with monopoly capitalism by arguing that the monopoly stage of capitalism had developed the basis for a broad anti-monopoly alliance. To wit, the rapidly emerging '*couches intermediaires*' as well as non-monopoly fractions of the bourgeoisie are increasingly alienated by a state which is itself more and more directly involved in the formation of monopoly projects at the

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has a continuity and a continuing allure." In James E. Cronin, "Politics, Class Structure, and the Enduring Weakness of British Social Democracy," *Journal of Social History* 16, no. 3 (1983): 130.

[8] Ross, "Marxism and the New Middle Classes: French Critiques," 163.

[9] Colin Leys, *Politics in Britain* (London: Verso, 1983); Peter Bleyer, "The New Realism: A Socialist Response to the Crisis in Britain" (BA Honours Research Paper, Carleton University, 1985).

[10] Boggs suggests that "Eurocommunism represents the continuous redefinition and transformation of frontism to suit an evolving Mediterranean Socialist strategy." Carl Boggs, *The Impasse of European Communism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), 41.

[11] Louis Althusser, "What Must Change in the Party," *New Left Review*, no. 109 (1978): 36.

expense of all others sectors in society. In this context, they argue, the working class must moderate its position and assume a hegemonic role in an anti-monopoly alliance.[12]

The anti-monopoly capital alliance was not in any real sense a new concept. More radical elements in the *Front populaire* of the 1930s justified their tactics by arguing that the enemy behind fascism could be limited to the '*200 familles*', the small monopoly fraction of the French bourgeoisie. Eurocommunism simply marked the internalization of many components of frontist politics and their development into a comprehensive strategic vision. The defensive tactics developed to deal with a specific and particularly lethal conjunctural threat were reinterpreted to form the basis for a conception of the transition to socialism, with the fear of fascism now reflected in a vigilant defence of liberal democracy. Ross' warning that "such alliance construction rests on a complicated, and quite precarious, political calculus" was formulated with regards to monopoly capital theory but could easily be applied to a broader range of similar projects.[13]

A new wave of sociological obituaries for class analysis and the working class' potential as political agency accompanied the end of the postwar boom and the growing crisis in Western capitalism.[14] In *The Forward March of Labour Halted?* Eric Hobsbawm draws a direct correlation between decreasing electoral support for the British Labour Party since the end of the 1940s and the numerical decline of the

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[12] See for example Paul Boccara, *Le Capitalisme monopoliste d'État* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1976); other theoretical concepts developed in France during this period include: the new working class in Serge Mallet, *La Nouvelle classe ouvrière* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1969); and the nouvelle petite bourgeoisie in Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (London: New Left Books, 1975).

[13] Ross, "Marxism and the New Middle Classes: French Critiques," 169. "Because Eurocommunism places almost exclusive emphasis on an electoral-parliamentary strategy it narrows conflict to the "bourgeois political institutional realm." Boggs, *The Impasse of European Communism*, 135. Ernest Mandel adds that "Relations between classes are reduced to relations between leaderships of political parties." Ernest Mandel, *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism* (London: New Left Books, 1978), 197. Similarly, Fernando Claudin, theorist and leader of the Spanish Communist Party, charges Eurocommunism with "the dissociation of the social struggle from the political struggle." Fernando Claudin, *Eurocommunism and Socialism* (London: New Left Books, 1978), 108.

[14] See *inter alia* André Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: an Essay on Post-industrial Socialism* (London: Pluto, 1982).

manual working class.[15] Meanwhile, seeing little hope of challenging the Labour Party's status as the pre-eminent political organization of the working class, the British Communist Party (CPGB) had evolved its own variant of the Eurocommunist project by 1977. Given the Labour Party's quasi-exclusive relationship with the trade unions, the CPGB's 'broad democratic alliance' tended to echo the aspirations of other social movements.[16] After the Labour government's defeat in the general elections of 1979, Thatcherite Toryism in power became the driving force behind this and a wider range of alliance building strategies. The 'New Realists' identified the radicalism and populism of Thatcherism as a novel and significant threat. In the *Politics of Thatcherism*, Hall and Jacques proposed that the labour movement construct the "broadest set of alliances against Thatcherism involving, in the initial instance, quite modest objectives."[17]

More recently, European social democracy has been revived under the banner of the Third Way. This moniker is currently associated with the programs and policies adopted by European labour and social democratic parties and most specifically by the UK's 'New Labour' government led by Tony Blair. 'New Labour' initially engaged in limited parliamentary alliance building with the Liberal Democratic Party on specific issues (e.g. proportional representation). More importantly, by retaining a measure of the Thatcherite program that preceeded it, Labour aspires to provide a basis for a cross-class alliance of the moderate Left, Centre and moderate Right that,

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[15] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Forward March of Labour Halted?* (London: New Left Books, 1981). Hobsbawm goes on, in the early 1980s, to tie together this fact, his esteem for the popular front tactic – whose legacy he believes includes "the greatest advances for the Left in Europe since the Russian Revolution" – and the threat of Thatcherism, to argue for an electoral pact between the Labour Party and the centrist SDP-Liberal Alliance. See Eric Hobsbawm, "The Retreat into Extremism," *Marxism Today*, April 1985, 10 and Eric Hobsbawm, "Labour: Rump or Rebirth?" *Marxism Today*, March 1984, 10.

[16] Sarah Benton, "Eurocommunism and *The British Road to Socialism*," in *Socialist Strategies*, ed. David Coates and Gordon Johnston (London: Martin Robertson, 1983). Forgacs explains the limits of the CPGB's alliance strategy as follows: "the CP arrived at a radical programme for building progressive social alliances but without any equivalent renewal of the political forms and agencies necessary for carrying out such a programme...How, for instance, could one reconcile in the political practice of the post-1977 CP an advocacy of a plurality of progressive movements, in which no one movement claimed supremacy or a monopoly of knowledge, with the Leninist form of the party governed by the principle of democratic centralism?" David Forgacs, "Gramsci and Marxism in Britain," *New Left Review*, no. 176, July-August (1989): 85.

[17] Hall and Jacques, eds., *The Politics of Thatcherism*, 16.

its proponents claim, would in effect supersede class and, some have recently argued, party as well.[18] The nature of the electoral system affects the relative importance of parliamentary and electoral coalition building on the Left. Whereas proportional representation tends to result more often than not in parliamentary or governmental coalitions, this result is much less common under the Westminster-style first-past-the-post system shared by Canada and the UK. While alliances are less frequent at the electoral/parliamentary level, they have been an important part of the extra-parliamentary and internal party dynamics of social democratic parties in both contexts, as have frequent and urgent appeals for party unity often accompanied by dramatic disciplinary action to ensure it.[19]

2.1 The Canadian Left

In 1929, the various labour and socialist parties in western Canada established a Western Conference of Labor Political Parties "to unify the activities of the affiliated parties... and to bring about he entire unification of the Labor and Socialist Movement throughout Western Canada."[20] The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), formed in 1933 with the drafting of the Regina Manifesto, was itself a project of alliance building. While the labour movement remained largely aloof from a formation that defined itself as "farmer, labour, socialist," the CCF did bring socialists into an alliance with grassroots agrarian radicalism and a powerful social gospel tradition, both important forces on the prairies.[21]

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[18] See Peter Mair, "Partyless Democracy: Solving the Paradox of New Labour?" *New Left Review* 2, no. 2 (2000).

[19] For references to studies indicating link between proportional representation and the emergence of parties rooted in social movements, see Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 268.

[20] Gad Horowitz, *Canadian Labour in Politics*, ed. John Meisel, vol. 4, *Studies in the Structure of Power: Decision-making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 2.

[21] On the social gospel tradition, see Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973). As Morley notes "an extraordinary proportion of the early leadership were clergymen." J.T. Morley, *Secular Socialists: the CCF/NDP in Ontario, A Biography* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983), 126. On agrarian radicalism in 1920-30s Western Canada, see the classic text by William Irvine, *The Farmers in Politics* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); see also David Laycock, *Populism and Democratic Thought in the Canadian Prairies, 1910-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) and Chapter 6 in Norman Penner, *The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis* (Toronto: Prentice-Hall, 1977).

The next phase in the evolution of the dominant social democratic strand of the Canadian Left was the formation of New Democratic Party in 1961 with the support of the CCF and the newly formed Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). The resolution passed by the CLC endorsing the formation of a new party, indicated "the fullest desire for the broadest possible participation of all individuals and groups genuinely interested in basic democratic social reform." Moreover, the new party would be "a political instrument of the Canadian people."[22] It would represent a "fundamental realignment of political forces in Canada in ... a broadly-based people's political movement which [would embrace] the CCF, the labour movement, farmer organizations, professional people and other liberally minded persons interested in basic social reform and reconstruction through our parliamentary system of government."[23]

The formation of the NDP both followed and flowed from a continuous and seemingly irreversible decline in postwar electoral support for the CCF. Having reached its high point during wartime, the CCF could not break through at the federal level due to its lack of success beyond the prairies.[24] The first response to this impasse was the gradual modification and moderation of the party program culminating in the replacement of 'anti-capitalist' language of the Regina Manifesto with a less combative Winnipeg Declaration as the party's platform document in 1956. Despite these efforts, the 1958 federal election dealt the CCF a further, and it would turn out final, blow. The party was reduced to five western seats while the leader, M.J. Coldwell, lost his own.[25]

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[22] Keith Archer, *Political Choices and Electoral Consequences: A Study of Organized Labour and the New Democratic Party* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 23; Horowitz, *Canadian Labour in Politics*, 203.

[23] Bryan Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: the Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980*, ed. George A. Rawlyk and Bruce W. Hodgin, *Political Issues in their Historical Perspective* (Toronto: Butterworth & Co., 1983), 288; Young, *The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF 1932-1961*, 132.

[24] See Chapter 2 in Archer, *Political Choices and Electoral Consequences: A Study of Organized Labour and the New Democratic Party;* CCF historian Walter Young refers to this as the period when "the party had been slowly bleeding to death at the polls." Young, *The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF 1932-1961*, 128.

[25] Archer, *Political Choices and Electoral Consequences: A Study of Organized Labour and the New Democratic Party*, 23.

Just as the NDP's strategic shifts and policy reformulations of the fifties and early sixties were at least in part responses to a historical period dominated by postwar prosperity and the Cold War, the rebirth of a broader Left, nationalist ferment and the early stages of economic downturn combined to create a new dynamic. Against the centrist alliance building of the party establishment, the Waffle proposed a new alliance politics intended to harness both nationalism and New Left.[26] While its own proposed manifesto and leadership candidate were defeated, the 1969 NDP convention adopted resolutions partly inspired by the Waffle. One of these identified "millions of Canadians [who] share our faith in Canada and our determination to strengthen and enrich Canada's independence and place in the world" because "continental integration has become so pervasive that Canadians who value an independent Canada and New Democrats who reject the values of corporate capitalism now share a common agenda."[27]

While the NDP had only limited success at the federal level over the next thirty years, the party's provincial wings formed governments several times in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. Unexpectedly, Bob Rae led the Ontario wing to power for one difficult term in 1990. In 1985, two elections prior to this victory, the ONDP had supported a minority Liberal government on the basis of a post-election accord on a shared legislative agenda.[28] In his history of the Rae government, Thomas Walkom describes the party's lack of serious consideration of the ramifications of parliamentary coalitions as it debated the merits of a more formal governing coalition versus a more limited accord.[29] In 1999, the Saskatchewan NDP would form just such a coalition government with the provincial Liberal Party after a poor poll result greeted its quest for a second term.

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[26] Brodie and Jenson, *Crisis, Challenge and Change*, 273.

[27] Quoted in ibid., 274; The Waffle's Manifesto 'For an Independent and Socialist Canada' presented – and defeated – at the 1969 NDP convention helped place economic nationalism on the public agenda and lay the groundwork for the battle against continentalism then, and later around the Free Trade Agreement.

[28] Alan Whitehorn, "Audrey McLaughlin and the Decline of the Federal NDP," in *Party Politics in Canada*, ed. Hugh G. Thorburn (Toronto: Prentice Hall, 1994), 323.

[29] Thomas Walkom, *Rae Days: The Rise and Fall of the NDP* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1995).

Alliances, of class and of party, have been critically important to the politics of the Left beginning in the late nineteenth century. In the Canadian context this has included electorally driven attempts at class alliances as well as the odd parliamentary coalition. Against this backdrop the formation of the Pro-Canada Network appears as an attempt at coalescing progressive social forces beyond the parameters of more narrow parliamentary politics.

The PCN's formation in response to the perceived danger of Canada-U.S. free trade does evoke memories of popular frontism. Similarly, the broad nature of the social forces it brought together in the attempt to defeat free trade – reaching beyond the labour movement and, to some extent, the traditional constituencies of the Left – is reminiscent of both social democratic and Eurocommunist calculations and aspirations of the postwar period.

Most importantly, in the Canadian context, the PCN represented a break with the narrower focus on parliamentary party politics that emerged out of a specific historical conjuncture. As the postwar boom ended and economic crisis took hold, a variety of old, new and renewed social forces developed a new dynamic. It is to the parameters and politics of this crisis that we now turn in our quest to understand the emergence of a Canadian popular sector and, out of it, the Pro-Canada Network.

3. Parameters of the Crisis

Whereas the American economy had ruled the postwar period unchallenged, by the early 1960s the defeated superpowers of World War II – West Germany, at the heart of the European Community, and Japan – were re-emerging as economic powerhouses. By the 1970s, western economies faced the additional challenge of competition from the newly industrializing countries in Asia and a dramatic indicator that access to cheap natural resources – a key engine of postwar capitalist development – was crumbling. The two oil shocks, the OPEC oil embargo in 1973

and the Iranian Revolution in 1979, would drive oil prices up by as much as fifteen hundred percent in the course of a decade.[30]

While the structural economic crisis that developed in Canada during the 1970s and culminated in the 1981-82 recession was clearly part of a broader international phenomenon, it also owed much to the particular nature of Canada's economic development. Because it was highly dependent on primary sector exports, the Canadian economy was directly affected by international developments such as the increasing production of minerals in the Third World and its manufacturing sector was crippled by high levels of foreign (mostly American) ownership which limited investment in R&D and technological innovation. A series of government reports and an explosion of academic literature detailed the damaging consequences of dependence.[31]

Even more fundamentally, the continentalist orientation of Canadian postwar mode of development – defined by some as "permeable fordism"– left it vulnerable to the economic vagaries of its giant southern neighbour and limited the effectiveness of Keynesian demand management tools.[32] Canada's vulnerability was exposed by the failure to be exempted from Nixonomics – "a series of draconian measures to shore up the American economy at the expense of its trading partners."[33]

After the protectionist measures initiated by the Nixon Administration in an attempt to solve its own domestic economic problems, it appeared that the Canadian economy was tightly tied to a falling star. The United States faced daunting challenges from new economic rivals and its share of world exports fell to 10 percent

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[30] Jeanine Brodie, *The Political Economy of Canadian Regionalism* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), 183.

[31] Among the most prominent reports were *Foreign Ownership and the Structure of Canadian Industry: Report of the Task Force on the Structure of Canadian Industry*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1968) and *Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects, Final Report*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1957). Bashevkin provides an extensive bibliography in the notes to Chapter 1 of *True Patriot Love: the Politics of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[32] Jane Jenson, "Representations in Crisis: The Roots of Canada's Permeable Fordism," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* XXIII, no. 4 (1990); Rianne Mahon, "Post-Fordism: Some Issues for Labour," in *The New Era of Global Competition, State Policy and Market Power*, ed. Daniel Drache and Gertler (Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1991).

[33] Stephen Clarkson, *Canada and the Reagan Challenge* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1985), 8.

in 1980 from 22 percent in 1950.[34] By the mid-1970s the Canadian economy faced a plummeting rate of productivity combined with booming inflation and high unemployment. While productivity continued to grow at an average annual rate of 2.3 percent between 1967 and 1973, from 1974 to 1981 it was at a virtual standstill.[35] In 1975, inflation hit 10.8 percent and by 1978 unemployment was pushing 9 percent.[36] In a new era characterized by global economic instability, the domestic crisis reached its full proportions after the second oil shock in 1979 and as the impact of the implementation of monetarism, in both the U.S. and Canada, began to be felt. By 1981, the Canadian economy had collapsed into a full-fledged recession with unemployment peaking at 12.3 percent in 1983 and an additional 2.9 percent of the workforce not actively seeking employment due to market conditions.[37] From 1979 to 1983, business bankruptcies doubled in number – from 5,474 to 10,913 – and more than quadrupled in net losses – from $342 million to $1,885 million.[38] The recession was hard felt in Canada's manufacturing sector with 194,000 jobs lost in one year alone.[39] A plummeting rate of manufacturing capacity utilization that went from a peak of 95.2 percent in 1974 to 66.3 percent in 1982 as corporations moved production out of Canada provides further dramatic evidence of economic decline.[40] As international demand decreased, continuing fiscal stimulation drove domestic demand for imports resulting in an increasing current account deficit.[41]

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[34] Jack Warnock, *Free Trade and The New Right Agenda* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1988), 58.

[35] Quoted in Brodie and Jenson, *Crisis, Challenge and Change*, 296; see also Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, First ed., 3 vols., vol. 1, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 72 table 2.2.

[36] Warnock, *Free Trade and The New Right Agenda*, 44.

[37] Ibid., 4 table 6.

[38] Ibid., 46.

[39] James Laxer, *Leap of Faith: Free Trade and the Future of Canada* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1986), 12; see also Brodie and Jenson, *Crisis, Challenge and Change*, 297 and Brodie, *The Political Economy of Canadian Regionalism*, 184.

[40] Warnock, *Free Trade and The New Right Agenda*, 47.

[41] David A. Wolfe, "The Rise and Demise of the Keynesian Era in Canada: Economic Policy, 1930-1982," in *Modern Canada: 1930s - 1980s*, ed. Michael S. Cross and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984), 64-71; David Wolfe, "The Canadian State in Comparative Perspective," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 26, no. 1 (1989): 118.

4. The Politics of the Crisis

Following on the tails of the postwar boom, economic crisis was joined by a broad wave of collective protest that swept Canada and the world. A major component of this upsurge in contestation was increasing labour militancy. Economic growth and the development of the Keynesian Welfare State (KWS) set the stage for a rapid increase in the rate of unionization as well as changes in occupational structure that began to transform the labour movement in all capitalist countries starting in the 1960s. The proliferation and extension of state programs and trade union rights drove an upsurge in public sector employment and unionization. In Canada, by 1986 the public sector accounted for 26.2 percent of all employment; by 1980, 45.8 percent of union members worked in the public sector – in the U.S. the equivalent figure was only 34.9 percent.[42] Organizing workers in public, health and educational institutions was the basis for more than two-thirds of the increase in union membership from 1966 to 1976.[43] Combined with continuing economic expansion, the result was not only rapid growth for the labour movement but its demographic recomposition as more women employed in the public sector and the private service sector entered the mix. The change was dramatic: whereas women accounted for 15.4 percent of union membership in 1962, by 1986 this figure was up to 36.4 percent.[44]

The size and influence of Canadian as opposed to 'international' (i.e., American) unions also increased substantially. Whereas 70 percent of trade unionists belonged to international unions in 1965, only 50 percent did in 1975, and this number fell to less than 40 percent a decade later.[45] Canadianization was, at first, largely a consequence of growth in public sector employment with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the National Union of Provincial and General

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[42] Ian Robinson, "Economistic Unionism in Crisis: The Origins, Consequences, and Prospects of Divergence in Labour-Movement Characteristics," in *The Challenge of Restructuring: North American Labor Movements Respond*., ed. J. Jenson and R. Mahon (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 31.

[43] Larry Katz, "The Attack on the Public Sector: Counter Strategy," *This Magazine* 1979, 43.

[44] Mary Lou Coates, Arrowsmith, David and Courchene, Melanie, "The Current Industrial Relations Scene in Canada," Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, 1989.

[45] Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz, *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms: From Wage Controls to Social Contract* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1993), 142.

Employees, the Public Service Alliance and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers coming to represent a large proportion of organized workers. By mid-1975, with 210,000 members CUPE had become the country's largest union.[46] By the early 1970s, the number of Canadian sections disaffiliating from their U.S.-based parent unions was also contributing to the trend.[47]

The growth and changing composition of the labour movement combined with other factors – including a still tight labour market and shifting perspectives because of challenges to Cold War assumptions – led to increasing militancy. While working time lost to strikes and lockouts averaged one percent from 1960 and 1965, from 1966 to 1975 it more than tripled to 3.6 percent.[48] Militancy was not limited to traditional 'bread and butter' demands. Unions and union activists were increasingly engaged in struggles around a variety of social and economic demands.[49] The new face of labour – Canadian, public sector, women, and minorities – also brought new issues to the bargaining table.[50] As Katz explains:

> The narrow, business unionist approach to trade unionism, which has been the predominant characteristic of Canadian labour history, is particularly unsuitable to the public sector. It isolates workers form their natural allies and in far too many cases it has paved the way for employers successfully dividing public sector workers from the citizens they serve.[51]

Nor was militancy limited to the labour movement as anti-war, student, women's and labour struggles in Europe and North America were added to continuing liberation struggles in Africa, Asia and Latin America.[52] In Canada, these struggles

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[46] Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: the Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980*, 265.

[47] See Robert Laxer, *Canada's Unions* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1976).

[48] Panitch and Swartz, *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms: From Wage Controls to Social Contract*, 15.

[49] See Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: the Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980*, 264-65; and Panitch and Swartz, *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms: From Wage Controls to Social Contract.*

[50] Briskin and Yanz also argue that this new 'face' created a more receptive audience for the strategy of coalition building. Linda Briskin and Linda Yanz, eds., *Union Sisters: Women in the Labour Movement* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1983), 67-199, 259-376.

[51] Larry Katz, "The Attack on the Public Sector: Counter Strategy," *This Magazine*, March 1979, 43.

[52] As we have seen, these developments posed a substantial challenge to the traditional pluralist perspective on collective action and social movements as well as to those holding political and

were joined by an increasing organized commitment to social justice activism from within Canada's mainstream Christian churches, a growing sentiment and organized advocacy for cultural and economic nationalism in 'English Canada' and elements of a national liberation movement in Québec.

In Canada as elsewhere, the 1960s saw the rebirth of the women's movement with the arrival of its second wave: the women's liberation movement. This period ran from the formation of the Voice of Women in 1960, through a multiplicity of feminist organizations and projects, and culminating with the founding of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC). NAC was formed in 1972 with the objective of monitoring the federal government's implementation of the recommendations made by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW). NAC subsequently broadened its mandate and evolved into a mammoth coalition of women's organizations with 130 member groups in 1977 and more than 500 member groups by the mid-1980s.[53]

Thanks to its growing strength, the feminist political process it practiced, and its particular discourse, the women's movement played a central role in the development of a Canadian popular sector and consensus-based coalition politics.[54] In their account of the emergence of NAC at the centre of the women's movement, Vickers et al. argue that the Canadian women's movement does not fit easily into any of the categories put forward in a standard typology of women's activism – i.e., interest group, ideological/left-wing, or state equality feminism. They suggest that in the case of English Canada there is "evidence instead of the emergence of an *integrative* model that includes aspects of all three."[55] They argue further that the

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economic power.

[53] Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: the Politics of Canadian Nationalism*, 138.

[54] For more background on the politics of the Canadian women's movement, see Jill Vickers, "Bending the Iron Law of Oligarchy: Debates on Feminization of Organization and Political Process in the English Canadian Women's Movement, 1970-1988," in *Women and Social Change: Feminist Activism in Canada*, ed. Jeri D. Wine and Janice L. Ristock (Toronto: Lorimer, 1991) and Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, and Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988); see also Chapter 3 below.

[55] Jill Vickers, Pauline Rankin, and Christine Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993), 699.

movement was characterized by a "radical liberal" worldview that "embodied a commitment to the ordinary political process, a belief in the welfare state, a belief in the efficacy of state action in general to remedy injustices, a belief that change is possible, a belief that dialogue is useful and may help promote change, and a belief that service or helping others is a valid contribution to the process of change." Vickers et al. conclude that this perspective predisposed the Canadian women's movement to work effectively in coalitions while limiting the sway of American feminist ideas that were far more likely to tend towards anti-statism.[56]

A Canadian peace movement with two strands – one focused on opposition to the war in Vietnam, the other galvanized by the purchase of the nuclear capable Bomarc-B missiles in 1959 and their arrival on Canadian soil in 1963 – joined the fray. As the names of prominent peace groups indicate (e.g. Combined University Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Student Union for Peace Action) students played a central role.[57] Along with its sister movements in Europe and the United States, the Canadian peace movement entered a new phase of activism after the two-track Pershing and Cruise Missile decision by NATO in 1979 and the Canadian government's 1983 agreement to test the Cruise on its soil.[58]

The activist ethos of the times even infected Canadian churches. The five mainstream Christian churches – Roman Catholic, United, Anglican, Presbyterian and Lutheran – worked together to form a series of ecumenical coalitions all broadly targeting social justice work. GATT-Fly, the coalition on international trade and development issues, was one of the first of these. At least 11 more interchurch coalitions would form over the course of the decade including the Task Force on Churches and Corporate Responsibility (TICCER), Ten Days for World Development, and Project North (now the Aboriginal Rights Coalition). All of these

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[56] Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women*, 36.

[57] Myrna Kostash, "The New Left," *This Magazine*, December 1980, 30; see also G. Moffatt, *A History of the Peace Movement in Canada* (Ottawa: Grapevine Press, 1982).

[58] Kostash, "The New Left."

projects became vehicles for social change work and for more learning about the many intricacies of coalition building.[59]

Last but not least, this was a period of increasing interest in and mobilization around nationalist themes, particularly economic and cultural. These were reflected in the demands of other movements – peace, labour, church, and women – and embodied in the formation of the Waffle and, one year later, the Committee for an Independent Canada (CIC). Founded in 1970 by former Liberal cabinet minister Walter Gordon, Toronto Star editor Peter C. Newman, and Canadian Forum magazine editor Abraham Rotstein, the CIC's steering committee was made up of thirteen Canadians from different partisan political backgrounds, including Edmonton publisher Mel Hurtig, former Tory cabinet minister Alvin Hamilton, *Le Devoir* editor Claude Ryan, and past NDP party president Eamon Park. In June 1971 a CIC delegation presented Prime Minister Trudeau with a petition bearing 170,000 signatures calling for greater Canadian independence. [60] While the Waffle and CIC were the most prominent organizational vehicles for cultural and economic nationalism, it was also reflected in efforts to create Canadian Studies programs and curricula, to oppose the dominance of American periodicals *Time* and *Readers Digest* and to scuttle resource mega projects.[61]

These were challenging times for the liberal democratic *status quo*. It faced criticism of corporate power from the 'old' and 'new' Left, nationalist ferment across

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[59] See Chapter 3 below.

[60] Nancy L.M. Russell, "The Return of the Nationalists," *Canadian Forum*, October 1985, 7; on conflict between the CIC and the Waffle, see Christina McCall Newman, "Growing Up Reluctantly," *Maclean's*, August 1972. McCall Newman describes the formation of the CIC as in part a competitive response to the Waffle: "That the Waffle was the only organized independentist movement in the country dismayed Gordon and Rotstein because they believed it would isolate nationalistic ideas in a fringe movement so remote from the Canadian political mainstream that they could never be realized." McCall Newman, "Growing Up Reluctantly," 58. Hurtig confirms the rivalry between the CIC and the Waffle, describes the intensity of dislike for the CIC within the CLC-affiliated labour movement and discusses the history of the CIC in detail. Mel Hurtig, *At Twilight in the Country, Memoirs of a Canadian Nationalist* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1996), 102-03, 13-16, 98-32.

[61] In fact, Laxer argues that Canadians were driven to develop a variety of independent nationalist campaigns by the absence of support from the mainstream labour and NDP leaderships for nationalist causes. "At the beginning of the 1970s, the first rumblings of change in the Canadian union movement held out little hope that transformation of the NDP into a left-nationalist party would be possible. Many Canadians had begun to look elsewhere for a political or cultural expression of their developing nationalism." Laxer, *Canada's Unions*, 311.

the political spectrum, new social forces testing the limits of acceptable protest, while militarism and discrimination were under the microscope. The emergence of these voices and their mobilization was a significant and necessary moment in the development of the Canadian popular sector. Many of the movements and organizations that would constitute it (e.g. NAC, ecumenical coalitions) were formed; a key theme (nationalism) took shape; and cracks in the 'two-and-one-half' party system opened space for extra-parliamentary politics. To understand the next step in the process that led to the formation of the Pro-Canada Network we first need to examine how the state and capital responded to the challenge.

4.1 The State

Initially, the Canadian state responded to the evolving crisis on two fronts. First, the Trudeau Liberal government borrowed from the nationalist critiques of foreign ownership, undertaking a series of tentative interventions in the economy. These included the Canada Development Corporation (CDC) in 1971, the Foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA) and a publicly owned oil company, Petro Canada, in 1973. While clearly targeted at diminishing foreign investment and economic dependence on the United States, these measures fell far short of the coherent industrial strategy suggested from different perspectives by the Gordon, Watkins and Gray Reports.[62]

Second, guided by first the Pearson and then the Trudeau government, the state responded to the growing demands of new social actors by proposing consultation and providing some support. The Pearson government initiated the groundbreaking Company of Young Canadians (CYC) in the mid-1960s.[63] Subsequently, and particularly from 1968 to 1972, funding for citizens groups or non-governmental organizations from the department of Secretary of State increased dramatically. Federal funding rose from $9,578,115 in 1962 to $51,467,044 in 1972,

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[62] See above; Brodie and Jenson, *Crisis, Challenge and Change*, 312-18.

[63] Susan Phillips, "How Ottawa Blends: Shifting Government Relationships with Interest Groups," in *How Ottawa Spends*, ed. Frances Abele (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991), 189.

moving from 45 to 64 percent of these groups' overall budgets.[64] Important initiatives undertaken during this period include the establishment of the Women's Program through the Department of Secretary of State and the funding of the National Indian Brotherhood (later the Assembly of First Nations).[65]

The impact of state funding has been the subject of debate, especially within the women's movement. Many have argued that government support served either to coopt – i.e., "reincorporate potentially dissident groups into the mainstream of society," to reinforce more conservative forces within movements, or as an "inexpensive alternative to a coercive approach and a way of defusing criticism."[66] Referring specifically to the CYC initiative that targeted youth in the heyday of the New Left, Kostash refers to the "cooptive tactics of the state tarted up as community action projects with lots of bucks."[67] Indeed, Pal points to evidence that most programs were designed with a "cooptive strategy in mind."[68] While there is no doubt the Liberal nationalist initiatives of this period were similarly intended to coopt or harness some of the public support for left nationalism, Watkins points out that,

> there is considerable consensus among a variety of commentators that the Waffle and the CIC were critical ingredients in creating the environment that forced Trudeau's hand with respect to CDC, FIRA and to some extent Petro-Canada.[69]

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[64] Martin Loney, "A Political Economy of Citizen Participation," in *The Canadian State*, ed. Leo Panitch (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1977).

[65] Sue Findlay, "Facing the State: The Politics of the Women's Movement Reconsidered," in *Feminism and Political Economy: Women's Work, Women's Struggles*, ed. Heather Jon Maroney and Meg Luxton (Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1987); Loney, "A Political Economy of Citizen Participation" ; David Long, "Culture, Ideology, and Militancy: The Movement of Native Indians in Canada, 1969-91," in *Organizing Dissent*, ed. William K. Carroll (Toronto: Garamond, 1992).

[66] Arguments proposed, in order by Loney, "A Political Economy of Citizen Participation," 448; Phillips, "How Ottawa Blends: Shifting Government Relationships with Interest Groups," 198; and Roxana Ng, *The Politics of Community Services: Immigration, Women, Class and State* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1988), 27.

[67] Kostash, "The New Left," 32.

[68] Leslie A. Pal, *Interests of State: The Politics of Language, Multiculturalism and Feminism in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 48; with regard to funding of native groups, see Sally Weaver, "The Joint Cabinet/NIB Committee: A Unique Experiment in Pressure Group Politics," *Canadian Public Administration* 25 (1982); on the women's movement, see Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women*; Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change* ; Findlay, "Facing the State: The Politics of the Women's Movement Reconsidered"; and Pal, *Interests of State: The Politics of Language, Multiculturalism and Feminism in Canada*, 50-51.

[69] Mel Watkins, "Where is the Waffle Now that We Need it?" *This Magazine*, November-December

Overall, a picture of an intricate and sometimes delicate dance between the state and these social forces emerges: collective actors driving the state towards economic intervention and social consultation while, at the same time, the state attempts to integrate these voices and their demands, and grapple with persistent economic decline. As it turned out, half steps could carry the dance only so far.

4.2 Capital's Reaction and the Liberal Retreat

As Langille, Ernst and others reveal in their studies of various corporate interest groups in formation, capital's attitude towards the initial Liberal social and economic strategy for dealing with the crisis was less than enthusiastic. Its profitability was caught between competition from Germany and Japan and the wage pressure generated by the industrial militancy itself freed up by full employment, trade union rights and an expanding KWS. Straight wage demands were, in turn, accompanied by demands from labour and others for a further expansion of the social wage. Canadian capitalists were also worried that the social stability essential to profitability would be threatened by "democracy gone wild." [70] Nor was the two-and-one-half party system seen to be dealing with the crisis effectively. During Trudeau's first mandate, the Liberals appeared far too willing to cater to movements and their demands. Adding insult to injury, the New Democratic Party's populist – and popular – attack on "Corporate Welfare Bums" during the 1972 federal election campaign did nothing to improve the image of entrepreneurship.

Between the failure of Keynesian demand management to 'fix the economy' and the cacophony of social and economic demands, a broader organic crisis appeared to be in the offing and serious measures were called for. Canadian capital adopted a new strategic orientation: first, a more sophisticated and strategic collective organization to advance its political purposes, and second, a shift from support for the

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1979, 41.

[70] David Langille, "The Business Council on National Issues," *Studies in Political Economy*, no. 24 (1987); Alan Ernst, "From Liberal Continentalism to Neoconservatism: North American Free Trade and the Politics of the C.D. Howe Institute," *Studies in Political Economy*, no. 39 (1992).

liberal continentalist *status quo* to an aggressive backing of neo-liberal continentalism and free trade.

The limited nature of the Liberal government's early 1970s intervention doomed it to failure. Moreover, by discrediting traditional Keynesian demand management it laid the basis for a dramatic shift to the policy orientation now being advocated by corporate interests. The abandonment of Keynesian demand management actually began in 1975 with the implementation of a monetarist tightening of the money supply by the Bank of Canada and the Liberal government's adoption of an Anti-Inflation Program legislating wage and price controls (the former quite effective but the later only theoretical) and suspending free collective bargaining for all workers.[71]

While this policy shift was highly appreciated by Canada's corporate elite, it did place both capital and the state in something of a quandary. With the politicization of the economic sphere brought about by wage controls, the narrow sectional concerns of traditional business organizations such as the Canadian Manufacturers Association (CMA) and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) left a critical void: a collective body that could represent capital's broader interests and participate in a tripartite bargaining on its behalf. This critical lacuna was filled with "one of the most interesting developments to come out of the recent tripartite discussions [is] the formation of the BCNI. It has been the inner council of this group, containing many of the leading personnel of the big bourgeoisie, which has been engaged on the business side of the tripartite discussions of 1977 and 1978."[72]

In 1976, the chief executive officers of one hundred and fifty leading Canadian corporations formed the Business Council on National Issues (BCNI).[73] As co-chair, Alf Powis the president of Noranda was in a good position to describe the

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[71] Panitch and Swartz, *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms: From Wage Controls to Social Contract.*

[72] Leo Panitch, "Corporatism in Canada," *Studies in Political Economy*, no. 1, Spring (1979): 79.

[73] These corporations held more than $700 billion in assets, had annual revenues of more than $250 billion and employed more than 1.5 million Canadians. In Langille, "The Business Council on National Issues," 73.

circumstances that gave the impetus to the formation of the Council. He identified, "the apparent inability of the Canadian economy to operate with maximum efficiency, the increasing confrontation between and among various segments of society, and the growing worry that the increasing share of the nation's production being handled through government was not an efficient and effective way to assure the highest standard of living for most Canadians."[74]

The BCNI's more selective and sophisticated approach – including setting up a virtual shadow cabinet – was complemented by other organizations taking on the same battle on complementary fronts. For example, the corporate-funded, Vancouver-based Fraser Institute became the home for intellectual advocates of neo-conservatism and played a critical role in developing elite and public support for its policies.[75]

The establishment of the BCNI was an important moment. It was another piece in the emerging network of organizations established to do battle for capital. Because of its cross-fraction and high-level membership, the BCNI marked a turn towards collective corporate activism. Capital and its new commitment to neo-liberal continentalism now had an instrument worthy of the name.

4.3 The Emerging Popular Sector Response

4.3.1 Another Liberal Retreat, the Bishops and Ethical Reflections

After the brief tenure of the Progressive Conservative government led by Joe Clark in 1979, the re-elected Trudeau Liberals once again put forward a nation-building strategy in 1980 with the National Energy Program (NEP) at its core. But this attempt at a 'Third National Policy' was extremely short-lived.[76] As a global recession hit in 1981, the interventionist pretence was once again abandoned as the Liberals beat a hasty retreat under substantial corporate and U.S. pressure.[77] Building

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[74] Quoted in ibid.: 48.

[75] William K. Carroll, "Neo-Liberalism and the Recomposition of Finance Capital," *Capital and Class* 38 (1989): 102; Brodie and Jenson, *Crisis, Challenge and Change*, 312.

[76] D.V. Smiley, *The Federal Condition in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1987), 179.

[77] The Liberals received plenty of positive reinforcement for this shift in direction. For example, a letter to the Finance Minister from the BCNI dated November 30, 1981 notes that "the apparent shift by the

on the initial abandonment of Keynesianism in 1975, spending on social programs was cut, including Unemployment Insurance benefits, post-secondary education and health care, and social security benefits were deindexed. As a result, the share of total government expenditures going to social programs fell from 46 percent in 1976 to 40 percent in 1982.[78] In that year the federal government introduced a new set of wage controls, the '6 and 5' program. By limiting the right to strike and setting maximum wage increases, the state moved to a policy that Panitch and Swartz have termed "permanent exceptionalism":

> It [6 and 5] made explicit the *ad hoc*, selective, "temporary" use of coercion, not merely directed at the particular groups of workers affected or at the particular issue of "emergency" at hand but rather designed to set an example.[79]

The Liberal government's second retreat from interventionism within less than a decade was accompanied by two specific developments that would have a significant impact on the development of the Canadian popular sector. First, whether searching for solutions to a worsening economic crisis or hoping to be perceived as such, the federal government appointed the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada (Macdonald Commission) with a mandate to recommend "appropriate national goals and policies for economic development."[80] Second, also in the fall of 1982, having closed the file on the repatriation of Canada's constitution which had dominated his government's agenda since its re-election in 1980, Prime Minister Trudeau took to the airwaves for a series

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Government towards a less interventionist stance in the economy on the whole is one of the most encouraging hallmarks of your initiative." Quoted in Langille, "The Business Council on National Issues," 59.

A strong correlation has been drawn between the areas of BCNI policy interest and activity and eventual government decisions and state policy. These include the demise of the National Energy Program (NEP), privatization of public assets, and an aggressive anti-inflation stance. BCNI and broad corporate resistance to the tax reforms included in Liberal Finance Minister Allan McEachen's 1981 budget led to his removal. His replacement Marc Lalonde met with BCNI head Thomas d'Aquino at his home. There, he is alleged to have negotiated a peace pact that included modifying the Liberal government's interventionist economic policies. Murray Dobbin, "Thomas d'Aquino: The De Facto PM," *Canadian Forum*, November 1992, 8.

[78] Brodie and Jenson, *Crisis, Challenge and Change*, 304.

[79] Panitch and Swartz, *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms: From Wage Controls to Social Contract*, 26.

[80] *Report of the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Developmental Prospects for Canada*, vol. 1 (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1985), xvii.

of what came to be known as televised sermonettes addressed to the Canadian people. In the context of recessionary gloom, spending cuts and wage controls, Trudeau's "moral defence of the free market system" was the spark that motivated Canada's Catholic Bishops unprecedented foray onto the political scene.[81]

The public statement issued by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) on New Year's Day 1983 became a rallying point and a key moment in the development of the popular sector. *Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis* was openly critical of the direction of the government's social and economic policy; it questioned the morality of monetary policy that prioritized control over the money supply and consequently the fight against inflation, over dealing with rapidly increasing unemployment. The statement was particularly significant because it went beyond critique to offer guidelines for alternative policies and, all the more unexpectedly, suggest political action. In their document, the bishops set out the basic principles that would underlie an alternative economic strategy and proposed a political strategy that reflected ecumenical developments in the 1970s by emphasizing movement and coalition building.[82] Bishop Remi De Roo, then Chairman of the Social Affairs Commission of the CCCB, explained their purpose:

> What we hope to do ... is contribute to the building of a social movement for economic justice in Canada. And there are signs of great hope, signs that people from so many walks of life and such a cross-section of interests can come together to look at what can be done – in solidarity and co-operation – to build this kind of social movement.[83]

While the response *Ethical Reflections* elicited from friends and foes alike was without precedent, the statement actually continued in the same vein as previous interventions by the bishops on issues of economy and society over the course of the 1970s. During this period, the Social Affairs Commission issued a series of statements in line with its mandate which included three areas of social justice concerns: general

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[81] Tony Clarke, *Behind the Mitre: The Moral Leadership Crisis in the Canadian Catholic Church* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1995), 50.

[82] CCCB, *Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis* (Ottawa: Concacan, Inc., 1983).

[83] Remi De Roo, "What's Wrong with Canada? Facing Up to the Crisis," *Alternatives*, Spring-Summer 1983, 7; see also Tony Clarke, "Coalition Building: Towards a Social Movement for Economic Justice," *Alternatives*, Spring-Summer 1983.

questions of faith and justice, justice in Canada, and justice in the Third World. The statements included: *Northern Development: At What Cost?* (1975), *From Words to Action* (1976), *A Society to be Transformed* (1977), *Witness to Justice* (1979), and *Unemployment: the Human Costs* (1980). In this company, *Ethical Reflections* distinguished itself by its timing as a clearly political intervention.[84]

The bishops could hardly have predicted the dramatic impact their statement would have. *Ethical Reflections* gained immediate and overwhelming attention in the mass media and became the focus for a sustained society-wide debate for weeks thereafter. The sources, vehemence and scope of the responses brought out by the statement hinted at a dramatic realignment of social forces.

While a fiery retort from conservative forces within the Church hierarchy was certainly predictable, shocked representatives of capital, as well as individual business people, generated a chorus of criticism. Prime Minister Trudeau's own negative reaction was accompanied by less prominent Liberal backbenchers of the Catholic faith tripping over each other in their haste to defend their government and their leader.[85]

Within the churches themselves, *Ethical Reflections* was an important shot in the arm for those engaged in social justice struggles. The bishops' stance became a source of legitimation for these activists. This was very important for Catholics who faced difficult battles within their own institutions, as one activist put it:

> It's in the language that I have long wanted the church to speak in. A few years back when we would talk about workers' struggles we were looked at strangely. You just didn't use that kind of language. We would have been

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[84] The first step towards *Ethical Reflections* was the drafting of a critique of the substance of Trudeau's televised addresses. Indeed, until the very last draft, *Ethical Reflections* was conceived of as an open letter to the prime minister. In the end this format was considered too "political" and abandoned. Tony Clarke, Interview by author, Ottawa, 31 October 1991.

Substantiated in Michael T. Kaufman, "Catholics Attack Trudeau policies," *New York Times*, 5 January 1983, A6: "Though their report did not mention the Prime Minister or any politicians by name, the bishops made it clear that they were responding to Mr. Trudeau's economic message to the nation in October in which the Prime Minister, appearing on television urged Canadians to ensure the sacrifices needed to increase productivity and so better compete in world markets."

[85] For an extensive listing of responses to Ethical Reflections, see CCCB Social Affairs Office, "An Initial Report on the Statement of the CCCB Social Affairs Commission 'Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis,'" Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, January 1983.

> happy if that kind of statement had been made a long time ago. But thank God it's being made now.[86]

The leadership and activists of other mainline Christian churches also welcomed *Ethical Reflections*. Among others, the Moderator of the United Church of Canada and the Primate of the Anglican Church issued strong supportive statements.[87]

As far as Tony Clarke, co-director of the Social Affairs office at the time, is concerned, *Ethical Reflections* became "... an even more important document for people outside the church then for people within it ... by far."[88] For the staff of the Social Affairs Commission attending follow-up workshops across the country it became clear that the statement was serving as a catalyst – it was bringing activists from different sectors together.[89]

The leadership of the labour movement also warmly received *Ethical Reflections*. As commentator Wilfred List noted, this development was rather unexpected:

> The bishops' statement caught the labour hierarchy by surprise. Most members of the commission were unknown to the labour leadership. There was a scurrying to find out who they were. But once that was established, the labor leaders lost no time in sending out messages of applause and support.[90]

Indeed, Canadian Labour Congress president Dennis McDermott greeted the bishops' statement as "the most significant to appear in this country in decades. It's clear, lucid, and courageous. It cuts right to the heart of the problem, which is the blatant

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[86] Activist Marg Bacon quoted in Ellie Kirzner, "Catholics' Class Act," *Now Magazine*, 6 January 1982.

[87] "Moderator Supports Bishops," *The United Church Observer*, February 1983, 16; "Anglican Leader Backs Catholic Bishops' Stand," *Ottawa Citizen*, 12 January 1983.

[88] Clarke, Interview by author. As one media report described it: "A blistering critique by a group of Roman Catholic bishops on the government's handling of Canada's recession appears to have achieved part of its objective by stimulating discussion at the grassroots level." "Bishop's Critique Causing Grassroots Talk, Priests Say," *Toronto Star*, 10 January 1983, A4.

In a confidential memorandum, a senior labour official compared *Ethical Reflections* to what was being accomplished within his own movement: "We really should expect more from our central documents. In part the problem is the labour movement's intellectuals – the church intellectuals have done much more impressive work from a left perspective." Sam Gindin, Confidential Memorandum to Bob White, 26 April 1984.

[89] Michael McBane, Interview by author, Ottawa 5 November 1991; De Roo, "What's Wrong with Canada? Facing Up to the Crisis."

[90] Wilfred List, "Links with Bishops would benefit CLC," *Globe and Mail*, 10 January 1983, B5.

immorality as well as unworkability of the neo-conservative medicine the Liberals have been force-feeding us for the last several years."[91] And the leader of the United Autoworkers (Canada) Bob White drew out some of the implications of the bishop's initiative:

> Really, when you look at it, the bishops were saying a number of things that we had been saying. The tragedies of unemployment, the suicides, mental breakdowns, family stress. But the fact that the church was saying it added a whole new status. *If it was just the labor movement doing it or the NDP doing it, then you get dismissed as a narrow self-serving group or a narrow political group*; but that's a little more difficult when it's the bishops [emphasis mine].[92]

Against the background of previous statements by the Catholic bishops promoting social justice and condemning the vagaries of capitalism, *Ethical Reflections* was particularly helpful in building bridges with the labour movement. Within days of the statement's release, the United Autoworkers (UAW-Canada) ordered copies of *Ethical Reflections* for all of its leadership and staff.[93] Over the course of the next few years, Remi De Roo, Adolphe Proulx and other bishops on the Social Affairs Commission, were invited to participate in a number of labour events.[94] Support for *Ethical Reflections* also came from academics and intellectuals from coast-to-coast.[95]

Within weeks of the release of *Ethical Reflections*, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) convened a conference to discuss its implications. According to one report, church, labour, anti-poverty and other leaders agreed to

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[91] Quoted in Ed Finn, "Church, Labour Agree on Need for 'New Social Movement,'" *Alternatives*, Spring-Summer 1983, 11.

[92] Quoted in Sheila McGovern, *Toronto Star*, 18 April 1983.

[93] "The statement by the Canadian Roman Catholic bishops was quite amazing. Its analysis is, in fact, more clearly left than either the NDP or the CLC... This statement and its calls for widespread discussion and radical change must be built on. It will lead to major divisions in the church and progressives will need support." Sam Gindin, Memorandum to Bob White, 4 January 1983.

[94] These included conferences of the B.C. Federation of Labour, the Confederation of Canadian Unions, the *Confédération des syndicats nationaux*, the United Auto Workers (Canadian Council), the National Farmers Union and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW). CUPW invited De Roo to address its negotiating committee and national executive committee in the midst of bargaining in 1984. De Roo subsequently gave the opening address to CUPW's biannual convention in 1986. Geoff Bickerton, Interview by author, Ottawa, 15 March 1992.

[95] Correspondence in CCCB Social Affairs Office files; McBane, Interview by author.

"work together in a new social movement that would develop more equitable and workable economic policies."[96] In his closing statement to the conference, CLC president McDermott called it "the beginning of an extremely meaningful dialogue ... not just a one-day love-in, but the formative stage of an important social coalition."[97] While the meeting contributed to developing positive relationships between participants and support for a coalition of social forces was clearly building, more questions were raised than were answered. No organizational format for such a project was proposed and, when McDermott told journalists the meeting had seen the birth of a "new social movement," Bishop Proulx was bound to explain, "[I]t's a coalition in a very broad sense. It has always been there without our knowing it."[98] Reinforcing the point, one CCCB staffer also attending the event thought the CLC had come with "too many conditions for forming a coalition" and had, for the most part, "just read prepared statements."[99]

Meanwhile, pressure was building on the bishops since strong labour and NDP support for *Ethical Reflections* had raised the issue of partisanship. Along with labour, NDP leader Ed Broadbent had praised the bishops for their initiative. Furthermore, the NDP announced plans to set aside one of the days of parliamentary debate in its allocation to propose a motion condemning the government for its "outright rejection of the sound economic advice given by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops." When the debate finally took place, on 15 April 1983, NDP finance critic Nelson Riis led off by giving the bishops his wholehearted endorsement.[100] Partisanship was a powerful criticism levelled at the bishops that was difficult to navigate given the absence of alternative sources of support in the parliamentary realm: the Conservative Party was rapidly shifting to the right under its new leader

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[96] Finn, "Church, Labour Agree on Need for 'New Social Movement'"; see also Louise Crosby, "RC Bishops Supported in Attack on Economy," *Ottawa Citizen*, 28 January 1983.

[97] Finn, "Church, Labour Agree on Need for 'New Social Movement'," 15.

[98] Quoted in Mark Nicholson, "Bishops in Politics" (M.J Thesis, Carleton University, 1985), 104.

[99] Quoted in ibid.

[100] Most of the remaining four hours of debate was taken up with an argument as to "just how 'Marxist' the bishops' statement was." Ibid., 88-92.

Brian Mulroney, and the Liberals, in government, were the primary target of the bishops' critique.[101]

Expectations were high for the bishops to put more meat on the bones of their statement – to operationalize their solidarity. As one activist commentator put it, "[t]he rhetoric of social movement has to be substantiated by bishops on the picket line, unions in the march for peace, and men in the campaign for women's' rights."[102] In light of the previous question, a second was being posed: if not partisanship, then what?

The bishops responded to both sets of concerns with a further public statement issued on 23 March calling for the "building of an independent popular or social movement for economic justice."[103] Within the Social Affairs Commission, opinions were divided as to the strategy to be employed to follow-up on *Ethical Reflections*. While some bishops preferred a more traditional approach based on lobbying, in the spirit of the initial statement that had gone beyond policy prescription and reflected the Commission's unstated objectives and a growing tradition within Catholic social justice activism, the Commission agreed to recommit to a focus on movement and coalition building.[104]

The bishops were also explicit on the issue of partisanship, stating: "We wish to re-emphasize that it is not our role to become directly involved in partisan politics."[105] As justification, they argued that "election strategies should be avoided so as not to lose the freedom and vitality required in organizing and maintaining a broad-

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[101] A number of Liberal backbench MP's were anxious to come to their governments' defence and attack the bishops for using their authority to "put government policies on trial." Their intervention led other Liberal backbenchers to come to the bishops' defence. "Bishops Rebuked by MPs for New Year Message," *Toronto Star*, 4 February 1983, A3.

[102] Don Lee, "Building a New Program," *Alternatives* 1983, 24.

[103] CCCB Social Affairs Office, "Follow-up to Statement Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis," 23 March 1983; "RC Bishops Debate Pushing for Change," *Globe and Mail*, 22 March 1983, A3; John Ferri, "Poor, Elderly, Unemployed Urged to Unite in Social Justice Fight," *Toronto Star*, 17 June 1983, A6; Bruce Ward, "Bishops Urge Grassroots Campaign for More Jobs," *Toronto Star*, 24 March 1983, A1; Clarke, *Behind the Mitre: The Moral Leadership Crisis in the Canadian Catholic Church*, 80.

[104] Nicholson, "Bishops in Politics," 106; Clarke, Interview by author.

[105] Social Affairs Office, "Follow-up to Statement Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis."

based movement for economic justice."[106] As chair of the Commission Bishop Remi de Roo added, "we're suggesting they (the movement) not get tied too closely to political groups because the short-term advantages are offset by the fact they can be left aside when the political winds shift."[107] In fact, the SAC bishops had intended from the outset to play the role of catalyst for movement building. Nor were they merely avoiding partisanship in order to protect their ecclesiastic stature. Indeed, they were far from convinced by the NDP's strategic orientation, arguing that "it's not a problem of the better management of government, which is the NDP argument, but realizing it's a structural problem."[108]

Another event in March 1983 provided for follow-up to the themes raised in *Ethical Reflections* and the hopes raised by the response. The CLC convened a conference entitled "The People's Response to the Planned Recession" to launch its campaign for an Economic Recovery Alternative in Ottawa (1-2 March 1983). President McDermott described the objectives as follows:

> Our first objective is to reach the union member with the Economic Recovery Alternative. Our second is to continue building a broader consensus for political and economic change, as reflected in the participation of people from outside the labour movement. Our third objective is to 'de-hire' governments in this country, starting with the one in Ottawa, that have broken the faith and the backs of the Canadian people.[109]

According to the Congress publication *Canadian Labour*, the strategic conclusion to be drawn from the event was clear:

> By the final session, the response was plain: a new coalition is coming together to fight back against government policies ... the core of this coalition will be organized labour. But as the list of more than 800 delegates attending the conference showed, it will include church people, teachers, students, consumer groups, women's groups, unemployed people, farmers, pensioners, human rights activities (sic), and many others.[110]

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[106] Quoted in Louise Crosby, "Clerics Reject Party Politics in Quest for Social Justice," *Ottawa Citizen*, 24 March 1983, A4.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Clarke quoted in Nicholson, "Bishops in Politics," 102.

[109] Quoted in Charles Bauer, "Labour's New ERA," *Canadian Labour*, March 1983.

[110] Ibid., 13.

Once again, in spite of some real advances, in general, rhetoric appeared to triumph over reality. The CLC's commitment to coalition building remained tentative and confined to the historical model that was the political equivalent of the 'ready-to-wear' suit. As McDermott reconfirmed at the conference, it was yet another vehicle for building support for the NDP.[111] But when this CLC coalition initiative fizzled out it did little to deter others from trying.

4.3.2 The Macdonald Commission

Not long after its launch in 1982 it became clear that the Macdonald Commission would become a massive endeavour. In the end, it involved months of consultation, received hundreds of briefs, and drafted hundreds of studies eventually included in a multi-volume report.[112] The Vanier Institute, a small Ottawa-based family and social policy research group, initiated the first step in what would become the popular sector response to the Commission. In September 1983, the Institute's Director wrote to more than eighty organizations asking whether they intended to submit briefs to the Commission. He also inquired about their interest in "maintaining an informal network for the duration of the Commission's life." A follow-up letter addressed to GATT-Fly elaborated the idea further:

> The Vanier Institute is establishing this network at its own initiative and expense, but with the full knowledge of the Commission. It is clearly of value to us, just as it is to you, that we are not the only ones to be heard on the need for and direction of alternative ways of guiding the evolution of the Canadian political economy towards sustainable patterns and socially responsible goals. You may find it helpful in strengthening your argument, to exchange submissions with some other members of the network and refer to their work in your presentation.[113]

Feeling a similar need for consultation, the Social Affairs office at the CCCB developed a chart that mapped out common points among the Macdonald Commission submissions of various popular sector groups.[114] The efforts of both the

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[111] Nicholson, "Bishops in Politics," 106; see Chapter 3 below.

[112] Daniel Drache, "Sins of Commission," *CUPE Facts*, March-April 1986; Richard Simeon, "Inside the Macdonald Commission," *Studies in Political Economy*, no. 22, Spring (1987).

[113] William A. Dyson, Letter to GATT-Fly, 21 September 1983.

[114] Briefs to the MacDonald Commission on the Economy: Common Links to CCCB, 1983; Clarke,

Vanier Institute and the Social Affairs office added one more layer to the relationships amongst popular sector groups and provided the foundation for Drache and Cameron's compilation of alternative perspectives published as *The Other MacDonald Report.*[115]

Despite the efforts of the Vanier Institute and the CCCB Social Affairs Commission, the Macdonald Commission's recommendations – issued with its final report in the fall of 1985 – paid little heed to the perspectives put to it by more than 250 labour and community sector groups during its hearings. This was clearest on the increasingly pertinent issue of a bilateral free trade agreement with the United States. While popular sector groups had roundly panned free trade in their submissions, a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement with the United States was the centrepiece of the Macdonald Commission's recommendations.[116] Meanwhile Macdonald's prescription for resolving Canada's economic woes – freeing up the market and reducing state intervention – were welcomed by the new Conservative government elected a year earlier and committed to an agenda of spending cuts, deregulation, and privatization.

The Macdonald Commission, both through its process and its recommendations, played a key role in the forging of the logic that was eventually to lead to the formation of the Pro-Canada, later Action Canada, Network. By largely ignoring the voices of labour, women, church, farmers and other social groups, the Commission achieved a number of results. First, it helped to legitimize a free market

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Interview by author; Michael McBane, Memorandum, 5 March 1987.

[115] Daniel Drache and Duncan Cameron, eds., *The Other MacDonald Report* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1985).

[116] "Hugh Thorburn, a well-known political scientist from Queen's University, was hired by the Macdonald Commission to analyze which interest groups made submissions to it. Among other things, he found that there were many new types of groups submitting briefs to this commission that had not done so to the previous Royal Commissions on the Canadian economy. Macdonald received 741 briefs in total compared with 297 to the Gordon Commission (1957) and 331 to the Rowell-Sirois (1937). Business associations and private companies made 250 submissions compared with 59 for labour. For the popular sector, the breakdown was as follows: Native peoples' organizations, 27; women's groups, 34; religious organizations, 12; social service and health agencies, 37; and voluntary and special interest associations, 97." Ibid., ix, footnote 1 [NOTE: this adds up to 266 for labour and popular sector combined, as opposed to 250 for business].

ideology, heretofore largely viewed as a foreign phenomenon.[117] Second, it demonstrated the growing unanimity among the different components of Canadian capital and the important role the Business Council on National Issues was playing in generating this consensus. [118] Third, by promoting a bilateral free trade agreement with the U.S. as the centrepiece of the Canadian variant of neo-liberalism or neo-conservatism, the Macdonald Commission contributed to the increasingly clear demarcation between the corporate vision for Canada and a popular sector perspective. Putting the core component for a Canadian neo-conservative project prominently on display also handed its opponents a shiny new target. As we shall see, the clarified map of social forces also helped to undermine any further serious attempt at tripartite consensus building.

4.3.3 Dialogue '86

During the 1984 federal election campaign, Brian Mulroney pledged that a Conservative government would call together labour and business for a dialogue on the economy. To meet this commitment the new government convened the National Economic Conference (NEC) on 22-25 March 1985 only six months after coming to power. However, few participants or observers consider the event to have marked the beginning of a dialogue on economic priorities.[119] Indeed, following the new government's first budget in May, fifty-eight representatives of labour, church, social and community groups who had participated in the conference, signed an open letter to the prime minister. In it they questioned whether the budgetary measures taken by

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[117] According to Doern, "...business interests almost uniformly told Macdonald they could compete with the Americans." G. Bruce Doern and Brian W. Tomlin, *Faith and Fear: The Free Trade Story* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1991), 54. He also notes that "Prime Minister Mulroney was well aware of the partisan value he could draw from the Macdonald Commission Report including using the imprimatur of its chair, a former Liberal cabinet minister, to provide bipartisan legitimacy for a bilateral trade initiative. The volumes of the report arranged on his desk, Mulroney spread his hands over them and told officials present in his office that summer day that he would use the report to beat John Turner in the next election." Doern and Tomlin, *Faith and Fear: The Free Trade Story*, 29.

[118] Langille details the work done by the BCNI promoting and orchestrating support for a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement both in Canada and in the US from the fall 1982 onward. In Langille, "The Business Council on National Issues."

[119] See, for example, the CLC's perspective on the Conference: "Two solitudes – one extolling the virtues of the market, leaner government and the entrepreneurial spirit; the other putting people first, their quality of life, their job and income security – trying to talk to each other, but finding little common ground." "National Economic Conference," *Canadian Labour*, April 1985.

the government reflected the majority opinion voiced at the NEC only two months earlier and called on the prime minister to redirect the government's socio-economic priorities. The letter's text provides an interesting contrast. On the one hand, it reflects a growing sense of popular sector consensus, to wit: "The conference presented an opportunity for a number of groups in our society to talk to each other, in some cases for the first time. In that process our groups realized we had common views in a number of areas." On the other hand, the text demonstrates a lingering if cautious openness to consultation:

> We expected that you would take our views into account. But you have disappointed us. Nevertheless, via this letter we are continuing the process of consultation with your government ... there appears to be a definite contrast between our agenda and the government's ... it doesn't have to be this way. As your government enters the second year of its mandate, we urge you to begin listening to all Canadians, not just those that reinforce your government's views. This surely is the road to genuine consensus within the Canadian community.[120]

Building on the process that led to the drafting of this joint letter, the Canadian Labour Congress set about planning its own attempt at uniting diverse opinions in one conference. Representatives of a number of popular sector groups were invited to sit on a steering committee to plan Dialogue '86, with CLC president McDermott, National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) president Chaviva Hosek, the head of the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO), Patrick Johnston and Denyse Rochon of the Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ) serving as co-chairs.

A number of participants quickly developed misgivings with this new process culminating in the representatives of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) withdrawing from the steering committee in the run-up to the event. The CCC's representatives, John Foster (United Church – Division of Mission in Canada) and Tony Clarke (CCCB) expressed a number of concerns. They questioned the objectives for the event as well as the assumption that its format should be modeled on that of the government's NEC. They argued that the sequence of events that followed the

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[120] Reprinted as "Open Letter to the Prime Minister on Socio-economic Priorities," *Canadian Labour*, October 1985.

NEC – including the critical evaluation put forward in the joint letter from church, labour, and other popular sector leaders – "called for a change of strategy on the part of labour and community groups."[121] Foster and Clarke's eventual decision to withdraw was in reaction to Conference organizers' decision to extend invitations to representatives of business groups. The two church representatives argued for just the opposite orientation in their letter to the CCC explaining their decision:

> We felt, at this particular historical moment, it critically important for people involved in labour unions and community groups to truly 'dialogue' with one another in an effort to develop more meaningful and effective working relationships around common economic and social policy concerns. It is too simplistic to assume that labour and community groups already have common understanding and agreements around major policy issues. The priority now, however, must be to consolidate links between labour and community groups with a view to developing a common platform of economic and social policy concerns.[122]

Dialogue '86 and the events surrounding it marked the further ascent of "movement building" as referred to by Clarke and Foster, on the popular sector's political agenda at the expense of tripartite strategies. Despite the invitation, the BCNI declined to participate, as did other business groups. Their lack of interest further confirmed the growing divide between business and the popular sector.

In a positive vein, the conference and the series of organizing meetings leading up to it provided one more forum for the nurturing of interpersonal and interorganizational relationships. For example, representatives from NAC and the CCCB, historically unlikely allies, developed a positive working relationship.[123] And while free trade was not on the formal agenda for Dialogue '86, discussions between NAC vice-president and trade expert Marjorie Cohen and representatives of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) led to a supplementary session dedicated to

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[121] Tony Clarke and John Foster, "Report and Recommendations to the Canadian Council of Churches concerning Sponsorship and Participation in the Follow-up to the National Economic Conference called 'Dialogue 86'," November 12 1985; Tony Clarke, "Notes for Response re. Dialogue '86," CCCB, 30 October 1985.

[122] Clarke and Foster, "Report and Recommendations to the Canadian Council of Churches concerning Sponsorship and Participation in the Follow-up to the National Economic Conference called 'Dialogue 86'."

[123] Marjorie Cohen, Interview by author, Vancouver, 11 December 1991; and Clarke, Interview by author.

free trade and a subsequent invitation to Cohen to address the USWA national conference.[124]

Confusion remained regarding how the potential for coalition building clarified by *Ethical Reflections* and Dialogue '86 would be actualized. A staffer for a large national union, reflecting on possible follow-up to Dialogue '86, reported to her union:

> It is not clear that the CLC is in a position to play a leadership role in organizing a coalition from the conference, nor is it clear that the other participants would accept such leadership...It might be more useful for the Congress to play a support role and let some other organization lead the coalition.[125]

Subsequent correspondence and publications from the CLC were rather more optimistic and viewed the organization's role as central. Executive Vice-President Dick Martin wrote to participants proposing to publish a newsletter "outlining current developments on the free trade debate" and asking for "information or documentation you think might be of interest and assistance in furthering a wider understanding of the free trade question."[126] The CLC's house organ *Canadian Labour* was characteristically enthusiastic in its account of the event and its results:

> A positive outcome of the conference was the establishment of a network of organizations concerned about free trade. The network will share information about the issue and the CLC, which is co-coordinating the network, will publish a newsletter for circulation among concerned groups.[127]

Yet, only two months later, further correspondence from the Dialogue '86 Steering Committee co-chairs was far more sanguine and limited in its hopes for follow-up. They concluded that: "It was not feasible to consider the development of a permanent coalition of groups represented at the Conference. Rather, it was felt that we should try to facilitate and encourage spontaneous developments to deal with specific issues." The same memorandum implicitly confirmed that organized follow-

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[124] Cohen, Interview by author; Dialogue '86, "Workshop Reports," Workshop Reports, Ottawa, 12-14 January 1986.

[125] Kathy O'Hara, Memorandum to Sam Gindin, 29 January 1986.

[126] Dick Martin, Letter to Laurell Ritchie, 19 February 1986.

[127] Susan Attenborough, "Dialogue '86," *Canadian Labour* 1986.

up to the meeting by its hosts was unlikely and that the issue of free trade had moved to the top of the collective agenda. To wit, it concluded: "We hope that you will use this material (attached) to forge links with others who attended Dialogue '86 so that you can develop common strategies to deal with issues of mutual concern. This sort of collective action is already taking place on issues like free trade."[128]

4.3.4 The Working Committee for Social Solidarity

Follow-up to Dialogue '86 – at least in the sense of the coalition building that was implied by statements during and after the conference – was not immediately forthcoming from the CLC or the event's steering committee. Another initiative following close on its heels did begin a process that would lead to the founding of the Working Committee for Social Solidarity (WCSS). In May 1986, the Social Affairs Commission of the CCCB brought together forty representatives of popular sector organizations for a meeting on the theme "Disenchantment with Co-optation: A Critical Look at Current Social Policy Trends in Canada."[129] As those who chose the title had no doubt intended, discussion quickly came around to the debate broadly opposing movement building and tripartism that had been prominent in the Dialogue '86 process.[130] A subsequent session on focused on the issue of income security and concluded with a consensus that a declaration of social vision was required to "provide a framework of analysis and help foster an alternative social policy agenda for popular groups."[131]

On 22 October 1986, a drafting committee for such a declaration met for the first time. The composition of the Working Committee for Social Solidarity was

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[128] Dialogue '86 Co-chairs, Letter to Delegates, 21 April 1986; reports from workshops at the event indicate that free trade and coalition building were prominent themes in the sessions on unemployment and the role of government. See Dialogue '86, "Workshop Reports."

[129] The list of participating groups includes the National Council of Welfare, NAC, the CCPA, the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Council for Social Development.

[130] The May 1986 meeting was not the first in "a series of consultations on the current socio-economic crisis." A first meeting held in the aftermath of the 1984 Federal Election in January 1985 had as its topic "Federal Economic Policies: What New Directions?"

[131] Michael McBane, "A Brief Chronology: the CLC and the Social Solidarity Project," Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Social Affairs Department, 1988.

diplomatically presented as "twelve representative persons who relate to various popular sector organizations."[132] While the church sector was well represented and a number of labour research officers took part, only one elected labour official, Laurel Ritchie, a vice-president of the small Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU), was of the group. Over the next six months the declaration went through a number of drafts and revisions and was endorsed by the National Farmers Union, the United Church of Canada and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. In March 1987, the draft declaration was circulated to representatives of provincial coalitions for comment.[133] While CLC research director Bob Baldwin had participated in the process, the Congress leadership's response was, at best, lukewarm. Failure to obtain CLC approval led to the cancellation of a launch for the declaration planned for May Day. A call from CLC executive assistant Ron Laing expressing strong disagreement with the content of the declaration led Bishop Proulx to request a meeting with Congress president Shirley Carr on behalf of the WCSS. On 23 June 1987 Proulx, Eilert Frierichs (United Church) and Tony Clarke met with Carr and Laing. As Proulx noted in a subsequent letter to Carr, NAC, the CSN, the CCU, and the Assembly of First Nations had by then also endorsed the declaration. After an initial decision not to back the declaration and three further months of intrigue, the CLC agreed to endorse.[134] Only weeks later *A Time to Stand Together... A Time for Social Solidarity* was made public. Its stated goal was to help create the "political and social vision required in order to provide a framework of analysis, avoid co-optation by governments and business, and foster an alternative social and economic policy agenda for popular sector groups."[135]

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[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Bishop Adolph Proulx, Letter to Shirley Carr, 26 June 1987; Shirley Carr, Letter to Tony Clarke, 10 November 1987; Tony Clarke, Letter to Shirley Carr, 7 December 1987. A detailed account of the difficulties involved in engaging the CLC in this process is given in McBane, "A Brief Chronology: the CLC and the Social Solidarity Project." The report of the CLC Executive Council meeting (December 1987) includes a reference to the Social Solidarity Statement as the "Catholic Bishop's Statement." In Minutes, PCN, First Assembly, Ottawa, 18-19 October 1987.

[135] Working Committee for Social Solidarity, "Background Paper," Ottawa, 1990.

While there had been many twists and turns in the road – and many more were to come – by late 1987, the outline of a Canadian popular sector was becoming clearer. There was no clear collective path from crisis to political response but new relationships and alliances were taking shape. Much remained to be determined and yet the important roles of specific groups and individuals were already apparent. In some cases these were unlikely candidates.

In the spring of 1986, a self-described "internal working paper" entitled "Toward the Formation of a Popular Sector Council" was circulated to a number of groups. A personal initiative of SAC co-director Clarke, the paper nevertheless provides a useful distillation of the strategic conjuncture. Through its title and its content, the document confirms the extent to which collective organization was viewed as critical to confront capital's own efforts in this regard. Clarke and the Social Affairs Commission's intent to strive towards this objective are also very evident.[136] Finally, that this document went to a second draft, but as far as can be determined no further, reflects the fact that a key ingredient was still missing from the mix. Indeed, by the fall of 1986 another process focused on uniting and mobilizing opposition to free trade was underway. This process became the focal point for the further development of the popular sector and the formation of the Pro-Canada Network.

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[136] Tony Clarke, "Towards the Formation of a Popular Sector Council," Ottawa, August 1986. The broader objective behind the WCSS initiative is also made clear in Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Social Solidarity Project," Background Notes, 1987.

Chapter 2

Toward a Theoretical Framework

1. Introduction

The emergence of a popular sector made up of progressive social movements and their organizations was, along with an increasingly organized and radicalized engagement by capital, a key characteristic of the politics of the crisis in Canada. Within the course of a few years, the Canadian state shifted gears, moving from half-hearted attempts at developing an industrial strategy and supporting non-state actors in the early 1970s to a monetarist war on inflation and a full-fledged retreat from interventionism culminating in the Macdonald Commission's advocacy of a "leap of faith" on Canada-U.S. free trade in 1985.

With the formation and development of the Business Council on National Issues, the various fractions of Canadian capital now increasingly spoke with one voice. Meanwhile, the global upsurge in social movement activity included a number of new and invigorated 'older' collective actors in Canada. Together, activists and leaders from the women's, labour, church, farm and other movements were beginning to consider alternative forms of agency – beyond both party politics and tripartism – to advance their constituencies' interests. There were also early signs of a quest for a common alternative social project.

This chapter attempts to identify building blocks for a theoretical framework to help explain, first, the formation of the Pro-Canada Network out of the Canadian popular sector, then its consolidation, and finally, its decline. It reviews the suitability of analytical tools to the study of a coalition of social movements. More specifically, this chapter will consider which framework can best help to explain the PCN's tentative steps beyond a lowest common denominator alliance where movements, organizations and their interests unite around a single issue; and to assess its potential as a convergence with a developing general will and democratic formation.

A review and evaluation of the dominant analytical models for the study of social movement mobilization serves as a starting point. This is followed by the sketching of a framework that draws together elements of these dominant paradigms –

resource mobilization theory and new social movement theory – with other important components. These include distinctly Canadian contributions that reflect the "definite sense of place" Canadian political science and sociology have managed to retain.[1] Both the uniquely Canadian but theoretically underdeveloped concept of the popular sector *per se* and a neo-gramscian perspective on social formation and mobilization, drawing on political economy and class-analytical traditions, that has proven its value for understanding the conjuncture of crisis and its politics, will feature prominently here.

Many concepts and terms will be raised and, hopefully, defined in the course of this chapter. One does demand some clarification at the outset. Bottomore defines a social movement as, quite simply, "a collective endeavour to promote or resist change in the society of which it forms part."[2] The study of social movements has a long history across a number of academic disciplines. Social historians – initially, mostly European – examined nineteenth and twentieth century social movements and sociologists and political scientists – for the most part, American – defined pressure groups and interest groups while their colleagues in social psychology focused on social protest as 'deviant behaviour' in the postwar period. This reflects the state of play in the field until the upsurge in contestation in the 1960s kicked off a boom in competing analyses.

Despite Bottomore's succinct contribution, an agreed definition of the social movement has been elusive. Certainly, the involvement of different fields of study has added a layer of complexity. In addition, as Petracca notes, "definitions have varied over time. Some offer normative appraisal; others reflect the analytical goals of the scholar using the terminology."[3] In his review of analytical frameworks for the study of social movements, Ayres notes that "although recent research has provided a

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[1] William K. Carroll, ed., *Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice*, Second ed. (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1997), 4.

[2] Tom Bottomore, *Political Sociology* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), 41.

[3] Mark P. Petracca, "The Rediscovery of Interest Group Politics," in *The Politics of Interests: Interest Groups Transformed*, ed. Mark P. Petracca, *Transforming American Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 5.

lengthy inventory of conditions that matter in the rise of movements, frequently what is left is a growing array of models whose differences reflect more the divergent interests of scholars than empirical factors."[4] That the study and categorization of social movements has been a crowded and highly competitive environment, where definitions vary over time and the line between assessment and prescription is often blurred, should not be surprising. Two related causes can be identified: the contemporary relevance of the subject(s) and the high political stakes involved since these competing analyses and definitions have the potential to legitimate specific social voices and demands.

Perhaps for similar reasons, the field of social movement analysis has tended towards posing dramatic polarities. New social movement theory highlights distinctions between 'old' and 'new' movements, interest group theory counterposes politics to protest while a tendency to view movements through the prism of a movement/institution or movement/party dualism persists more or less across the board.[5] Underlying all of these pairings, this paper will argue, is a disinclination to allow for the complex and critically important interplay of structure and agency.

The following review of theoretical frameworks for the study of social movements, and their relevance to the case of a social movement coalition, will lay the basis for an account of the formation and development of the Pro-Canada Network.

2. Classical Pluralist Theory

Pluralism became the "empirical account and normative vision of American politics."[6] Social movements are viewed through its basic assumptions regarding the nature of power in liberal democracies: the neutrality of the state and a wide

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[4] Jeffrey M. Ayres, *Defying Conventional Wisdom: Political Movements and Popular Contention against North American Free Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 20.

[5] To some extent, these polarizations were reinforced by the wave of popular mobilization beginning in the 1960s, which *was* often inspired by anti-state and anti-party themes. Wainwright, *Arguments for a New Left: Answering the Free-Market Right.*

[6] Petracca, "The Rediscovery of Interest Group Politics," 5.

distribution and equality of access to power on a level playing field for competing interests. In his classic statement of the pluralist model, Dahl argued that these conditions provided for consensus, stability and the public good.[7] As MacAdam notes, "the implication is clear: groups may vary in the amount of power they wield, but no group exercises sufficient power to bar others from entrance into the political arena."[8] Furthermore, "[b]ecause one center of power is set against another, power itself will be tamed, civilized, controlled and limited to decent human purposes, while coercion...will be reduced to a minimum."[9] Conflict could thus be peacefully resolved through institutionalized politics; social protest and the movements that carry it forward are consequently irrational and, deservedly, marginal.

Classical liberal approaches to the study of social movements emphasized the marginality of protest with the movement's detachment from existing political systems leading to long-term ineffectiveness and, finally, the recovery of these movements within a new societal equilibrium.[10] In various ways, social order and disturbance theory, mass society theory, relative deprivation theory, and collective behaviour theory all attempted to explain individual participation in protest movements as a consequence of the structural strains of rapid social change.[11] As a result, "movement participation was relatively rare, discontents were transitory ... and movement actors were arational if not outright irrational."[12]

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[7] Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956); Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

[8] Doug MacAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 5.

[9] Robert Dahl quoted in ibid., 6.

[10] See *inter alia* J. Craig Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization theory and the Study of Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 9, no. 527-53 (1983); Jean L. Cohen, "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements," *Social Research* 52, no. 4, Winter (1985): 671.

[11] For social order and disturbance theory, see David Truman, *Governmental Process; Political interests and Public Opinion*, Second ed. (New York: Knopf, 1971); for mass society theory, see Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society;* for relative deprivation theory, see Gurr, *Why Men Rebel;* and collective behaviour theory, see Smelser, *The Theory of Collective Behaviour.*

[12] Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization theory and the Study of Social Movements," 528; see also MacAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency.*

A number of challenges to the classical explanations for social protest and the formation of social movements emerged within the liberal pluralist paradigm. Elite critics argued that access to power was not in fact equal.[13] Both within political science and sociology, Olson's critique was most influential.[14] Firmly rooted in neo-classical economic theory, Olson's approach focused on individuals as rational actors interested in maximizing their interests and minimizing their costs. The result was a methodologically individualistic basis for an approach to collective action.[15] Olson's work had a substantial impact within the American social sciences. As McCann notes, Olson's analysis "most effectively cut into the heart of the pluralist assumptions about group mobilization."[16]

Olson's approach became the target of revision and critique in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The mobilization of millions of Americans, among others, around a variety of causes and movements undermined the simple economistic assumptions concerning human nature that had led Olson to the pessimistic conclusion that collective action for collective goods would not be supported by large groups.[17] Within political science, interest group theory evolved from the Olson-like economism of "exchange theory" to a more inclusive version capable of conceiving of some individual commitment to "providing collective goods, rather than simply maximizing their own material well-being."[18]

3. Resource Mobilization Theory

Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) in its different variants refutes the classical definition of the type of collective behaviour exemplified by social

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[13] Theodore J. Lowi, *The Politics of Disorder* (New York: Basic Books, 1971); Elmer E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People* (New York: Winston, 1960).

[14] Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965).

[15] Ibid.; Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization theory and the Study of Social Movements," 536.

[16] Michael W. McCann, *Taking Reform Seriously: Perspectives on Public Interest Liberalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 174.

[17] Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization theory and the Study of Social Movements"; McCann, *Taking Reform Seriously: Perspectives on Public Interest Liberalism.*

[18] Paul A. Sabatier, "Interest Group Membership and Organization: Multiple Theories," in *The Politics of Interests: Interest Groups Transformed*, ed. Mark P. Petracca (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 109.

movements as dysfunctional and irrational. It also rejects the concomitant emphasis on integration, equilibrium and harmony. In fact, RMT posits social movement participants as rational actors and collective action as a reflection of substantive societal cleavages not merely the result of the impact of short-term social change.[19] Consequently:

> The "rational actor" (individual and group), employing strategic and instrumental reasoning, replaces the crowd as the central referent for the analysis of collective action.[20]

As McCann points out, most revisions of Olson maintained "his focus on the vital role of organizational forms themselves as key variables of effective citizen mobilization."[21] Indeed, "organization and rationality are ... the catchwords of this (resource mobilization) approach" and, consequently, movements are validated as "credible political agencies."[22]

Some critics have argued that the economistic, rational choice and strategic bias of the RMT approach is not well-suited to the study of the development of the collective identities which, in turn, form the basis for social movements.[23] It is important in this regard to distinguish between two strands of RMT: an organizational approach best exemplified by McCarthy and Zald and a political process version developed by Tilly and Tarrow among others.[24] In both of these variants, resource

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[19] Cohen, "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements"; Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization theory and the Study of Social Movements."

[20] Cohen, "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements," 674-5.

[21] McCann, *Taking Reform Seriously: Perspectives on Public Interest Liberalism*, 175.

[22] Cohen, "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements," 676 and Carroll, "Social Movements and Counterhegemony in a Canadian Context," 7.

[23] See, among others, Cohen, "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements."

[24] Zald and McCarthy, eds., *Social Movements in an Organizational Society*; Zald and McCarthy, eds., *The Dynamics of Social Movements*; John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (1977). Charles Tilly, Louise Tilly, and Richard Tilly, *The Rebellious Century, 1830-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution.* Sidney Tarrow, "Comparing Social Movements." *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters 4, no. 39-54* (1986); ibid., "National Politics and Collective Action: A Review of Recent Research in Western Europe and the United States." *Annual Review of Sociology 14, no. 421-40* (1988); ibid., "Struggle, Politics and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements, and Cycles of Protest." *Cornell Studies in International Affairs Western Societies Papers No.21* (1989); and ibid., *Power in Movement: Social Movements,*

mobilization theory does help to explain similar processes at the level of coalition formation amongst already existing social identities represented by movements and movement organizations. Yet, despite this potential, studies of coalition formation or social movement convergence are relatively infrequent within the body of RMT work.[25]

Some initial points can be made with regard to an RMT-based approach to coalitions of social movements. First, where coalition formation is considered the emphasis is placed squarely on the organizational dynamics involved. Second, the weaknesses of an excessively economistic approach to social movements that focuses on the maximization of resources are replicated here. Consequently, in the final analysis coalition formation is viewed as unlikely.[26] An overview of one of relatively few RMT-inspired case studies of movement coalitions serves to illustrate these points.

Staggenborg examines the formation of an American Pro-Choice coalition. In this context she specifies two sets of "environmental conditions" conducive to coalition formation:

> [C]oalitions were formed to take advantage of environmental opportunity in the period after 1970, the year in which repeal victories were won in four states including New York ... Secondly, coalitions were formed in the face of environmental threat.[27]

Collective Action and Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[25] As Zald perhaps the most prominent practitioner of the RM approach points out: "Although there is still much to be learned about the internal operations of SMOs (Social Movement Organizations) – in particular, about the processes of schisms or mergers – I do not think that it is a major gap in our knowledge. But such a gap does exist in our understanding of social movement industries." Mayer N. Zald, "Looking Backward to Look Forward: Reflections on the Past and Future of the Resource Mobilization Research Program," in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, ed. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 337. Hathaway and Meyer confirm the inadequacy of the literature on social movement coalitions drawing particular attention to the "relative paucity of studies." Will Hathaway and David S. Meyer, "Competition and Cooperation in Social Movement Coalitions: Lobbying for Peace in the 1980s," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* XXXVIII (1993-1994): 160.

[26] Bert Klandermans, "Linking the "Old" and "New": Movement Networks in the Netherlands," in *Challenging the Political Order*, ed. Russell J. Dalton and Manfred Kuechler (London: Polity Press, 1990), 125.

[27] Susan Staggenborg, "Coalition work in the Pro-Choice Movement: Organizational and Environmental Opportunities and Obstacles," *Social Problems* 33, no. 5 (1986): 380.

Environmental conditions also indirectly influence coalition formation by affecting the level of resources available to individual social movement organizations. With the interaction of environmental conditions and resources, coalition formation becomes most likely when individual organizations lack the resources to take advantage of opportunities, fend off threats **or** when coalition work allows movement organizations to conserve resources for other tactics.

Hence Staggenborg concurs with an argument often made within RMT – while the formation of coalitions amongst social movements is possible, these are highly unlikely to be enduring.[28]

> Once exceptional environmental conditions subside, ideological conflicts and the organizational maintenance needs of individual movement organization are likely to cause conflicts within coalitions which may lead to their dissolution.[29]

Coalition formation, from this perspective is very much a function of strategic-instrumental resource maximization; consequently "competition is equally likely."[30]

The economism of the rational choice model at the root of this analysis is quite clear in Staggenborg's conclusions. Her proposals for overcoming this apparent built-in obsolescence of coalitions involve limiting the "resource strain" on participating groups. This is achieved by three means: first, by minimizing or even avoiding completely the development of an organizational structure at the coalition level; second, by focusing coalition activities in areas which would be inaccessible cost-

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[28] Klandermans, "Linking the "Old" and "New": Movement Networks in the Netherlands," 125; Bert Klandermans, "Interorganizational Networks: Introduction," in *Organizing for Change: Social Movement Organizations in Europe and the United States*, ed. Bert Klandermans, *International Social Movement Research* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1989), 304.

[29] Staggenborg, "Coalition work in the Pro-Choice Movement: Organizational and Environmental Opportunities and Obstacles," 388.

[30] Klandermans, "Interorganizational Networks: Introduction," 304. In any case Zald points to the impetus for broad coalition formation coming from electoral politics: "The possibility of a "rainbow coalition" bringing together ethnic groups defined as "have-nots" and other "have-nots" as a significant entity could presage a significant shift in the control of party policy. It does not, I believe, portend a new left social movement, since its advocates tend to operate largely in the arena of electoral politics." Mayer N. Zald, "The Future of Social Movements," in *Social Movements in an Organizational Society*, ed. Mayer N. Zald and John McCarthy (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Books, 1987), 325.

wise to individual organizations; and finally, by depending on the resource base of a participating group with a well developed infrastructure.[31]

3.1 Continuity

An important contribution of the resource mobilization paradigm to the study of social movement coalitions is the ability to identify and highlight contemporary as well as historical similarities amongst social movements.[32] The emphasis on continuity in social movement forms and activities is rooted in both divergent strands of the RMT approach. In their analysis of eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century collective actors, Tilly and Tarrow adopt a historical method providing a firm basis for comparison over time.[33] In this context inaccurate assumptions regarding 'old' movements become less likely and past precedents for contemporary movements are highlighted. For example, the authors of studies of three 'old' social movements conclude respectively with regard to movement form and movement participants:

> [T]he accent on consensual and decentralized decision making is not, however, new to social movements. As the Oneida community (American communal experiment of the mid-nineteenth century) illustrates, the affairs of 'old' social movements were often handled in a decentralized and participatory manner.[34]
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> Just as the Chartist movement was composed of both working and middle classes, participation in the West German peace movement cut across class line.[35]

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[31] Staggenborg, "Coalition work in the Pro-Choice Movement: Organizational and Environmental Opportunities and Obstacles," 388. In their subsequent study of the coalition of US peace groups lobbying for a nuclear freeze, Hathaway and Meyer focus on framing the strategic trade-off between "cooperation" and "differentiation" a calculation that is clearly less relevant in the case of a cross-movement coalition. Hathaway and Meyer, "Competition and Cooperation in Social Movement Coalitions: Lobbying for Peace in the 1980s." A similar framework is also adopted by Diani in his account of Italian ecological groups. Mario Diani, *Green Networks: A Structural Analysis of the Italian Environmental Movement* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

[32] Eduardo Canel, "New Social Movement Theory and Resource Mobilization: the Need for Integration," in *Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice*, ed. William K. Carroll (Toronto: Garamond, 1992), 43.

[33] Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution;* Sidney Tarrow, "National Politics and Collective Action: A Review of Recent Research in Western Europe and the United States," *Annual Review of Sociology* 14, no. 421-40 (1988); Tarrow, "Struggle, Politics and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements, and Cycles of Protest"; Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*, ed. Peter Lange, *Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[34] D'Anieri, Ernst, and Kier, "New Social Movements in Historical Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 22, no. 4, July (1990): 451.

[35] Ibid.: 453.

On the question of values, the authors note that the post-materialist or qualitative values identified as driving recent movements – e.g. personal autonomy and self-actualization – were central to the Oneida community in the mid-nineteenth century.[36]

The historical approach – political process or what Cohen terms the strategic-interaction paradigm – also shares a primary emphasis on organizational forms with the other major tradition within RMT. In fact, it has been argued that the organizational-entrepreneurial approach (Zald and McCarthy) tends to *predetermine continuity* amongst movements because of the more narrow and formal organizational definition of social movements it adopts:

> Neglecting the difference between a movement and its organizational representations will almost inevitably lead to the conclusion that there is nothing 'new' about the contemporary movements.[37]

But this assessment is perhaps too harsh; strong roots in organizational theory are helpful for assessing continuity over time and, crucially, for the explanation of coalition formation across movements.

While critics highlight the inability to deal with the formation of social identities as a key weakness of organizational theory *vis-à-vis* the study of social movements, this limitation is less of a handicap when dealing with coalition formation. Indeed, in the consideration of the coalescing of previously, if not permanently, formed identities, movements and their organizations, a focus on the rational choice perspective of these actors is far from irrelevant.[38]

3.2 Linkages

Another strength of an approach informed by organizational theory is the focus on linkages that emerges from its examination of social networks, organizational dynamics and political processes. McCarthy and Zald describe "the

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[36] Ibid.: 455.

[37] Dalton and Kuechler, eds., *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*, 279.

[38] For example, Offe & Wiesenthal refer to the "transitory rationality of opportunism" in an attempt to contextualize strategic decisions taken by labour. Claus Offe and Helmut Wiesenthal, "Two Logics of Collective Action," *Political Power and Social Theory* 1 (1980).

variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements."[39]

In spite of the relatively limited number of studies of coalitions it has spawned, RMT's organizational approach opens the door to this work by emphasizing that social movements are themselves far from monolithic. Rather they consist of shifting coalitions of constituents and can thus be considered as networks of networks.[40] Furthermore, there is an understanding that "as a rule, social movements do not act as isolated units but exist within the context of other overlapping, complementary or oppositional movements."[41]

This recognition is reflected in a series of concepts that are of interest for the study of coalition formation. Curtis and Zurcher place social movement organizations (SMO) within 'multi-organizational fields.' These are defined as "the total possible number of organizations with which the focal organization might establish specific linkages."[42] These linkages can be established on the organizational level "by joint activities, staff, board of directors, target clientele, resources, etc." and on the individual level "by multiple affiliations of members."[43]

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[39] Zald and McCarthy, eds., *Social Movements in an Organizational Society*, 1213.

[40] Neidhart quoted in Dalton and Kuechler, eds., *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*, 289. Indeed, as Tarrow argues, many early movements were in fact coalitions: "Though early analysts insisted on the importance of class in galvanizing these movement, it was through the interclass and translocal coalitions created through print and association that the first successful movements took shape." Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*, 191.

He adds: "Social coalitions, sometimes purposefully constructed but often contingent and provisional, concerted collective action against elites and opposites in the name of general programs. The escalation of specific group demands into general programs was, itself a product of the need to raise common umbrellas above a plethora of petty claims." Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*, 78.

[41] Rucht quoted in Tarrow, "National Politics and Collective Action: A Review of Recent Research in Western Europe and the United States," 431.

[42] J.L. Curtis and L.A. Zurcher, "Stable Resources of Protest Movement: The Multi-Organizational Field," *Social Forces* 52 (1973): 53.

[43] Curtis and Zurcher quoted in Klandermans, "Linking the "Old" and "New": Movement Networks in the Netherlands," 123.

The prevailing conception of inter-movement cooperation as contingent and temporary and lacking institutional materiality is reflected in the 'alliance system' framework.[44] Focusing primarily on resource maximization – albeit broadly defined and including, for example, tangible and non-tangible resources along with extended communication and recruitment networks involving creation of political opportunities – Klandermans also highlights relationships between old and new movements.

> Old social movements, like unions, can, and as shown by our study of the Dutch peace movement, in fact do become part of the alliance system of new social movements. New social movements use the resources and opportunities provided by old movements. Old movements revive in the wake of the protest cycle using resources innovations and opportunities created by the new social movements.[45]

Klandermans' study of the Dutch peace movement also, not surprisingly, leads him to forcefully challenge the notion that the newness of NSM's is necessarily rooted "in terms of marginality or detachment from existing social and political institutions."[46]

Klandermans distinguishes between the supportive 'alliance system' and opposing 'conflict system.' While the former provides resources and political opportunities to movement organizations and the latter drains resources and restricts opportunities, the boundaries between the two constructs "remain vague and may change in the course of events."[47] He draws on the example of the American women's movement in the 1970s to explain the dynamic relationship between movements and these two systems. Without a well developed opposition (conflict system) in the 1970s the women's' movement saw no need to develop a strong coalition of support (alliance system). The election of a neo-conservative government and growing influence of the New Right provided the movement with a substantial conflict system at which point the absence of an effective alliance system became a liability.

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[44] Klandermans, "Interorganizational Networks: Introduction," 304.

[45] Bert Klandermans, "Linking the "Old" and "New": Movement Networks in the Netherlands," in *Challenging the Political Order*, ed. Russell J. Dalton and Manfred Kuechler (London: Polity Press, 1990), 135.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Klandermans, "Interorganizational Networks: Introduction," 303.

> It was only when the women's movement appeared to be on the defensive that it started to build new coalition – but too late to save the Equal Rights Amendment.[48]

Finally, the Social Movement Sector (SMS) concept represents an extensive attempt to contextualize the phenomenon of contemporary social movements. McCarthy and Zald first develop it as a composite picture of Social Movement Industries (SMI) and Social Movement Organizations (SMO) in a given society.[49] Garner and Zald broaden the definition and parameters for the SMS through a comparative study of the United States and Italy.

> The Social Movement Sector is the configuration of social movements, the structure of antagonistic, competing and /or cooperating movements that in turn is part of a larger structure of action (political action in a very broad sense) that may include parties, state bureaucracies, the media, pressure groups, churches, and a variety of other organizational factors in a society. Configuration refers both to the amount and structural relation of social movements activity and the orientation or goals of action.[50]

While this definition is insufficiently focused to be of particular use for the study of coalitions, Tarrow subsequently provides a narrower, more appropriate, definition:

> [A] configuration of individuals and groups willing to engage in disruptive direct action against others to achieve collective goals. This includes formal SMOs, but it also extends to those who participate only sporadically in their activities, but who participate in a movement subculture and act as an informal support structure. It can also include ordinary interest groups when these adopt the tactics of disruptive direct action, or cooperate with those who do...

Tarrow continues:

> It (the SMS) is a communications network that facilitates the diffusion and testing of new action forms, organizational styles, and particularly ideological themes. Within it, there are often one or two movements that color the preoccupations and methods used by other movements during the era. Within

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[48] Ibid.

[49] McCarthy and Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." See also Mayer N. Zald and John McCarthy, "Social Movement Industries: Competition and Cooperation Among Movement Organizations," in *Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change*, ed. Louis Kriesberg (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1980). The roots of these concepts in an economic model – i.e., analogous to firms, industries and industrial sectors – is symptomatic of the economism of the organizational approach. In this same vein, McCarthy and Zald's highlighting of social movement 'entrepreneurs' seems less problematic if one understands that "...they had in mind a concept very close to that of 'moral entrepreneurs' who had been observed in social movement activity since the Reformation." Tarrow, "Struggle, Politics and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements, and Cycles of Protest," 29.

[50] Roberta Ash Garner and Mayer N. Zald, "The Political Economy of Social Movement Sectors," in *Social Movements in an Organizational Society*, ed. John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald (Transaction Books, 1987), 294.

> the SMS, forms of collective action and interpretive themes spread from one movement organization to another, often across broad ideological divides... [51]

Garner and Zald sketch the dimensions along which a given Social Movement Sector can be assessed and compared as well as the factors that determine these results. Among the dimensions they include, size, degree of organization, social location of support and locus of action, ideological orientation, autonomy and character of change over time.[52] They consider a broad range of determinants including constraints – i.e., the extent of spatial and functional centralization of the political system, the relative weight of private and public sectors, and the degree to which political rights are legally enshrined. The nature of political parties is given particular attention including the level and nature of party organization and constitutional or other limitations on the formation of new parties. Garner and Zald do not limit themselves to political and organizational factors. They include the embedding of national structures in the global political economy and phases of capital and the business cycle since "in every society, the mode of production is a major determinant of the nature of political action and of the Social Movement Sector."[53]

Some practitioners of what has been considered the 'political process' variant of resource mobilization theory reject the association with RMT. For example, Charles Tilly seeks to distance his work from a theory that "identifies the amassing or spending of resources as the absolutely central phenomenon, and to that extent distracts attention away from power struggles and from group organization."[54] According to MacAdam, in the political process approach "a social movement is held to be above all else a political rather than a psychological phenomenon. That is, the

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[51] Tarrow, "National Politics and Collective Action: A Review of Recent Research in Western Europe and the United States," 432; see also Tarrow, "Struggle, Politics and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements, and Cycles of Protest," 16-19.

[52] Garner and Zald, "The Political Economy of Social Movement Sectors," 296.

[53] Ibid., 303; Tarrow argues that Garner and Zald's politicization of the SMS concept is a significant step towards tying movements to politics. Tarrow, "Struggle, Politics and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements, and Cycles of Protest," 29, 32-33.

[54] Quoted in Ayres, *Defying Conventional Wisdom: Political Movements and Popular Contention against North American Free Trade*, 19.

factors shaping institutionalized political processes are argued to be of equal analytic utility in accounting for social insurgency."[55]

From this perspective the 'political opportunity structure' is defined as "the dimensions of the political environment which either encourage or discourage people from using collective action."[56] Tarrow describes the four aspects of opportunity as: the degree of openness or closure of the polity, the stability or instability of political alignments, the presence or absence of allies and support groups, and divisions within elite or its tolerance or intolerance of protests.[57] Tarrow suggests that social movement mobilization also requires sufficient pre-existing organization to take advantage of opportunity as well as moral commitment to a movement on the part of activists.[58]

4. New Movement Theory

The emergence of the student, women's, anti-racist, peace and environmental movements in the 1960s and their problematic relationship with the traditional political agencies of the Left – trade unions and political parties – sowed the seeds for a reaction against an orthodox Marxist view of collective behaviour. The label New Movement Theory (NMT) is now attached to the broad and heterogeneous range of perspectives on contemporary social movements that do nonetheless share a number of basic characteristics. First, they challenge the privileging of class as fundamental societal cleavage and therefore the primacy of the working class and the labour movement as agencies for social change. Secondly, they view 'new social movements' as constituting a clear break with the forms and practices of previous collective actors – specifically the labour movement. Thirdly, having broadened the range of social groups relevant to social and political change they focus on the social and cultural identity of these actors.

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[55] Quoted in ibid., 14.

[56] Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*, 18.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

Beyond these three important points of agreement, the various variants of New Movement Theory part ways. They differ in their account of the emergence of 'new movements' and in their political prescriptions. Alain Touraine and Alberto Melucci both tie new movements to the emergence of 'post-industrial society' where struggle no longer takes place over political or material demands but rather over the "production of symbolic goods." Ronald Inglehart posits a shift to 'post-materialist' values across the Western world as the driving force behind new movements. Jürgen Habermas sees new social movements as attempting to protect lifestyles in the wake of an assault on the "lifeworld" by both the market and the state.[59]

Hegemony and Socialist Strategy is the flagship of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's contribution to the realm of NMT. Laclau and Mouffe's distinctive approach to new social movements is worthy of attention for a number of reasons. First, their paradigm is explicitly targeted as a critique of a class-theoretical tradition while at the same time reinterpreting and appropriating a number of concepts culled from the work of Antonio Gramsci. Second, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse approach has been influential garnering a significant following and generating vigorous critical responses. Third, and most significantly for the purposes of this paper, their approach has attracted attention because it deals explicitly, if as it will be argued unsatisfactorily, with the question of political agency in capitalist democracies and, consequently, with the potential role of social movements and social movement coalitions.

In Laclau and Mouffe's account of history, the French Revolution takes on dramatic importance as the chronological starting point of the "Democratic Revolution," the historical phase in which the western world, their argument goes, remains ensconced. This period, now over two hundred years old, is characterized by,

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[59] Alain Touraine, *The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 774; Melucci, *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*; Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics*, vol. 16 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Habermas, "New Social Movements," 33.

> the profound subversive power of the democratic discourse which would allow the spread of equality and liberty into increasingly wider demands and therefore act as a fermenting agent upon the different forms of struggle against subordination.[60]

A two-edged political logic emerges within this optic. On the one hand, class struggle becomes merely one instance of the broader democratic struggle. On the other hand, the democratic revolution opens the historical space to an ever-growing number of antagonisms or struggles of subordination.[61]

> Once the conception of the working class as a 'universal class' is rejected, it becomes possible to recognize the plurality of the antagonisms which take place in the field of what is arbitrarily grouped under the label of 'workers' struggles.'[62]

The consolidation of new struggles around these antagonisms in the 1960s and 1970s is traced to a series of structural developments which have "provided the objective conditions."[63] Thus, social movements only "fully develop" out of the pre-existing antagonisms made possible in an earlier stage of the democratic revolution and specifically in response to the changing face of western capitalist social formations in the aftermath of the Second World War. These changes include the establishment of a new hegemonic formation characterized by the changes in the labour process associated with Fordism, growing intervention in social life by the newly established Keynesian Welfare State and, finally, the increasing uniformity of social life brought about by a media-driven mass culture. Together these developments have constituted an "intensive regime of accumulation" involving a radical commodification of social life.[64]

4.1 The Radical Democratic Project

The lynchpin of Laclau and Mouffe's political argument is a far-reaching reinterpretation of the Gramscian concept of hegemony. Gramsci has been the object

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[60] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 155.

[61] Peter Osborne, "Radicalism Without Limit? Discourse, Democracy and the Politics of Identity," in *Socialism and the Limits of Liberalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 211.

[62] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 167.

[63] Mouffe, "Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Toward a New Concept of Democracy," 91.

[64] Ibid., 91-93; Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 161-65.

of a vigorous intellectual tug-of-war in which Laclau and Mouffe are important participants.[65] While they appropriate Gramsci's notion of hegemony, their critics argue that Laclau and Mouffe dispose of a number of its defining characteristics. First, hegemony is stripped of its class content as the leading role of the working class, explicit in Gramsci, now vanishes. Second, the disappearance of the political role of the working class is rooted in the elimination of any relationship between hegemonic projects and the mode of production. As a result, the "organic crisis," which for Gramsci was a generalized crisis of the economic and social basis of a social formation, is transformed into a more ephemeral breakdown of a "unifying symbolic order."[66]

This radically revised conception of hegemony becomes the constitutive principle for the democratic revolution as the universal aspirations of the socialist project are welcomed back through the rear door:

> If every antagonism is necessarily specific and limited, and there is no single source for all social antagonisms, then the transition to socialism will come about only through political construction articulating all the struggles against different forms of inequality.[67]

And consequently:

> Everything depends on the left's ability to set up a true hegemonic counteroffensive to integrate current struggles into an overall socialist transformation.[68]

The two key concepts that emerge to consolidate the basis of the democratic political project seem of particular interest for the study of coalition formation. Again, Gramsci's paternity is invoked for an "expansive as opposed to neutralizing hegemony." An 'expansive hegemony' links demands of different struggles in order to create 'chains of equivalence.'[69] Thus the Left must create an "expansive

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[65] Forgacs, "Gramsci and Marxism in Britain."

[66] Mike Rustin, "Absolute Voluntarism: Critique of a Post-Marxist Concept of Hegemony," *New German Critique*, no. 43 (1988): 159.

[67] Mouffe, "Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Toward a New Concept of Democracy," 98.

[68] Ibid., 99.

[69] Ibid., 103; see also Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.

hegemony, a chain of equivalences between all the democratic demands to produce the collective will of all those people struggling against subordination."[70]

To some extent, the discourse approach addresses an important weakness in other theoretical frameworks: the lack of attention paid to the process of social identity formation. As Rustin points out,

> the insight at its core (Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*) is that social and political identities are constructed ideologically, and are not merely passive reflections of other levels in the social structure. *The process of definition needs to be given due weight in the theory of agency* [emphasis mine].[71]

Furthermore, the emphasis Laclau and Mouffe place on the fluidity of social identities is an essential precondition for any political project with hegemonic and transformative aspirations.[72] And, at least at the abstract level, their emphasis on an expansive hegemony and chains of equivalence between struggles would seem a priori to privilege the formation of coalitions at the practical level.

The discourse-theoretical variant of NMT does nevertheless bear some important flaws. While the emphasis on the fluidity of social identity opens the door to a consideration of the importance of political practice for the construction of any potentially hegemonic project, the simultaneous demand that the components of a radical pluralism remain indeterminate creates a seemingly irresolvable contradiction. Adding to the confusion, Laclau and Mouffe accord sufficient stability to social identities for them to be translated into struggles. As Osborne notes they allow for "fluidity of social identity but also sufficient stability in discourse construction for a shift from subordination to oppression and therefore a basis for political organization."[73] This fundamental contradiction is reflected in Laclau and Mouffe's political argument insofar as their hegemonic project depends at the same time on the

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[70] Mouffe, "Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Toward a New Concept of Democracy," 99; see also Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 182.

[71] Rustin, "Absolute Voluntarism: Critique of a Post-Marxist Concept of Hegemony," 167.

[72] Ibid.: 161; Osborne, "Radicalism Without Limit? Discourse, Democracy and the Politics of Identity," 217.

[73] Osborne, "Radicalism Without Limit? Discourse, Democracy and the Politics of Identity," 217-8.

construction of some form of unity amongst struggles and movements and, on the irreducible separateness of these struggles. According to Osborne:

> We are thus confronted with an argument for the 'autonomisation of spheres of struggle' and the 'multiplication of political spaces' as the condition for a hegemonic unity of oppressed groups at another level.[74]

It has also been argued that the discourse paradigm is of little assistance in the study of actual social phenomena for, in its obsession with fluidity and contingency, it leaves "structure and fixity unexplained."[75] With regard to Laclau and Mouffe's formulations this is even truer of their radical democratic prescription than it is of their critical description of the socialist tradition. Indeed, beyond the valuable yet vague commitment to an expansive hegemony, no hint of the type of organizational forms or institutions that might carry forward this project is revealed, leaving it to depend on "the persuasive power of an inherently unstable hegemonic discourse."[76]

We now approach the fundamental weakness of the identity-discourse paradigm that seriously undermines both its explanatory and hortatory power *vis-à-vis* social movement coalitions. Ironically, these problems are rooted in the determinism of an approach pledged above all to the rooting out of all essentialism. If Laclau and Mouffe are unable to explain the formation of social identities, such as those behind social movements, despite their emphasis on the openness of the social, it is primarily because of the direct, unmediated correspondence they draw between changes in the socio-economic formation in the postwar period and the emergence of new social identities. Such clear structural determinism combined, strangely enough, with a highly abstract provision of quasi-absolute fluidity in social identity leads to the conclusion that "any form of political subjectivity can be conjured up at any time provided one has the right discourse."[77]

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[74] Ibid., 212.

[75] Allen Hunter, "Post-Marxism and the New Social Movements," *Theory and Society* 17 (1988): 893; in Mouffe, "Radical Democracy or Liberal Democracy?" 104, Mouffe's interviewer remarks: 'It (your approach) gives a more optimistic political prognosis, but it fails to connect discourse to actual social groups and institutions."

[76] Bob Jessop, *State Theory: Putting Capitalist States in their Place* (London: Polity Press, 1990), 301.

[77] Osborne, "Radicalism Without Limit? Discourse, Democracy and the Politics of Identity," 217; see also Nicos Mouzelis, "Marxism or Post-Marxism?" *New Left Review*, no. 167, January-February

5. Class Analysis and the Politics of Alliance

While following two of the earliest theorists of social movements Marx and Engels, many socialists have challenged the transformative potential of 'non class'-based movements. Generally, they question the salience of the societal cleavages represented in these movements for a transformative political project. As Scott argues:

> Despite methodological differences, social movements are accorded a no less anachronistic status within structural Marxism than they were within functionalism, though for rather different reasons. Social movements are defined negatively as not-quite-class-movements. Like institutions in functionalism, class movements in Marxism provide a norm against which other forms of activity are measured; a norm in terms of which other social movements constitute deviant cases.[78]

But many contemporary critiques of the Marxian approach to social movements, including Scott's and some of those within the realm of NMT, are premised on a narrow reading of what has been a rich and diverse perspective on political agency. Before, for example, accepting Laclau and Mouffe's reinterpretation of Gramsci, a broader body of theory and the wider variety of political projects it has influenced must be considered. As Lynne Segal has put it:

> There are many weaknesses in the Marxism that has inspired most of the Left for over a hundred years... But that tradition was never synonymous with the elitism and authoritarianism that has characterized Leninist notions of the vanguard party substituting itself for mass support, any more that it was synonymous with the paternalism that has characterized Fabian notions of the democratic state reforming from above and hostile to extra-parliamentary culture, movements and struggles.[79]

It has, in fact, been argued that the emergence of 'new movements' is more appropriately understood as a reaction to the failure of these specific forms of agency – i.e., Communist (East and West) and Social Democratic political projects.[80] Many of the criticisms applied to Marxist theory and practice *as a whole* would be more appropriately directed to the specific instances of narrowly determinist variants of a

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(1988); Terry Eagleton, *Ideology; an Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991).

[78] Scott, *Ideology and the New Social Movements, Controversies in Sociology* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 39.

[79] Lynn Segal, "Whose Left: Socialism, Feminism and the Future," *New Left Review*, no. 185, January-February (1991): 90.

[80] See *inter alia* Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch, "Socialists and the 'New Conservatism'," in *The Socialist Register*, ed. Ralph Miliband, Leo Panitch, and John Saville (London: The Merlin Press, 1987); Gunder Frank and Fuentes, "Nine Theses on Social Movements."

socialist worldview and political project. Gramsci's remark made in a different if not wholly unrelated context that "it often happens that people combat historical economism in the belief that they are attacking historical materialism," could quite easily be applied to those critiques premised on an account of the broad range of socialist thought and experience as uniformly and homogeneously economic reductionist and class determinist.[81]

A more even-handed, if nonetheless necessarily brief, overview of the spectrum of Marxian and other socialist considerations of political agency is essential to any assessment of the relevance of class analysis to the study of social movement convergence or coalition formation. No doubt this task is rendered more difficult by the fact that more deterministic traditions, whether merely by virtue of the conjuncture in which they emerged or, as some have argued, a sinister teleology, have come to dominate the historical record. As is generally the fate of the defeated in the realm of history, less 'successful' socialist projects have been overshadowed if not completely obscured.

Lynne Segal has called the propensity of the "identity-based Left" to prematurely bury more recent socialist experiments, in her own specific experience the libertarian Left of early 1980s Britain, "a wilful, deliberate forgetting."[82] Nor is Segal alone in drawing such conclusions.[83] The basis for this dissent from an increasingly dominant intellectual perspective lies in a rather more positive assessment of the creative contributions emanating from debates within socialist theory and practice of the recent past. As Wilde notes,

> there are many socialists who have used what is essentially class theory to try to understand and encourage new forms of resistance, not to reduce the

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[81] Antonio Gramsci, ed., *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 163.

[82] Segal, "Whose Left: Socialism, Feminism and the Future," 91.

[83] See *inter alia* Norman Geras, "Post-Marxism?" *New Left Review*, no. 163 (1987); Norman Geras, "Ex-Marxism without Substance: Being A Real Reply to Laclau and Mouffe," *New Left Review*, no. 169 (1988); Laurence Wilde, "Class Analysis and the Politics of New Social Movements," *Capital and Class*, no. 42 (1990).

> struggles of groups to simple conception of tensions within the economic structure.[84]

A brief overview of the theoretical innovation and debate during this period provides an alternative perspective on the relevance of class analysis to the consideration of political agency.

5.1 Economic and Sociological Determinism and Political Substitutism

An alternative reading of the Marxist tradition must deal with the oft-made accusation of economic reductionism. The irony of the characterization of Marxism as ineluctably tied to a simplistic base/superstructure model is that it emerged at the tail-end of the period during which this model was most firmly and widely challenged and, in most cases, rejected. Debate over the nature of the state took Marxist theory far beyond these narrow limits, leading amongst other developments to the notion of its 'relative autonomy' and the mushrooming of interventions on the 'boundary question' wherein the nature and composition of classes were subject to vigorous debate.

While earlier challenges questioned the very salience of class analysis and the existence of the working class *per se*, the questions and issues which can loosely be defined as relating to the 'boundary question' – where to draw the line among the various classes characteristic of capitalist social formations – came to preoccupy theorists still struggling to construct a socialist project.[85] Rather than serving to "render class analysis obsolete," a plethora of formulations ranging from Erik Olin Wright's 'contradictory class locations' through the Poulantzian emphasis on the manual/non-manual divide to Ehrenreich's definition of the 'Professional-Managerial Class' served to highlight the complex and heterogeneous nature of classes in capitalist society.[86]

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[84] Wilde, "Class Analysis and the Politics of New Social Movements," 74.

[85] Peter Meiksins, "Beyond the Boundary Question," *New Left Review*, no. 157, May-June (1986): 102.

[86] Wilde, "Class Analysis and the Politics of New Social Movements," 63. See also Erik Olin Wright, *Class, Crisis and the State* (London: New Left Books, 1978); Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* and Guillermo Carchedi, *On the Economic Identification of Social Classes* (London: Routledge, 1977).

In *Marxism and Politics*, Ralph Miliband drew the implications of this heterogeneity for 'working class' politics:

> The problem of 'substitutism' arises in various forms and degrees because the working class is not a homogeneous entity, and that the 'unity of the working class,' which the party seeks or claims to embody must be taken as an exceedingly dubious notion... On this view, a united party of the working class, speaking with one voice, must be a distorting mirror of the class.[87]

Political substitutism – the process whereby the political agent proceeds down the slippery slope from class to party to vanguard, leading finally to Stalin – is indeed the second major charge levelled at Marxism. Hirst describes the first step in this descent as follows: "[B]ecause of the fundamental political unity of the working class, parliamentary forms of democracy based on multiparty elections will become obsolete. The people have a single interest and a plurality of parties is no more than a obstacle to its realization."[88] Whereas 'post-Marxists' like Laclau and Mouffe argue that this degeneration of the Marxist political project was inevitable given some pre-ordained teleology, Miliband sees the roots of a conjunctural as opposed to essentialist approach in classical Marxism. He places Marx at one end of the spectrum "insofar as his own emphasis falls very heavily on the action of the class" and contextualizes Lenin's vanguard party with the demands of the historical moment.[89]

In any case, as we have seen above, Miliband contends that "more than one party is in fact the 'natural' expression of the politics of labour."[90] While his argument is rooted in the heterogeneity of a working class composed of different fractions, a similar conclusion has been drawn by reference to what some posit as Marx's methodological individualism. Mcquarie and Spaulding, for example, reconsider contemporary Marxism's failure to account for and ally itself with 'non-class'-based

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[87] Ralph Miliband, *Marxism and Politics*, ed. Raymond Williams and Stephen Lukes, *Marxist Introductions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 126-7.

[88] Paul Hirst, *From Statism to Pluralism: Democracy, Civil Society and Global Politics* (London: UCL Press, 1997), 73.

[89] Ibid., 19. Miliband is far from alone in this regard, Macquarie and Spaulding refer to Marx as slipping into the usage of "class as social actor" in Donald McQuarie and Marc Spaulding, "The Concept of Power in Marxist Theory: A Critique and Reformulation," *Critical Sociology* 16, no. 1. (1989): 18-20.

[90] Miliband, *Marxism and Politics*, 129.

social movements. They conclude that calls for a theoretical and political realignment away from an exclusive revolutionary subject and towards broad anti-capitalist coalitions are not fundamentally at odds with Marxism. In their own words:

> [W]e need not see this as such a radical break with Marxist theory... once we remember that the working class is not a monolithic structure but is composed of a plurality of individuals with a variety of class and non-class-based emancipatory interests.[91]

5.2 A Broader Tradition?

Another reading of the Marxist political project lies in its broader emancipatory vision. For Marx, and for many who followed him, the emancipation of the proletariat was a first stage in the full emancipation of humanity.[92] Whether or not Marx himself or subsequent theorists or projects taking his name ended up substituting the emancipation of the proletariat for human emancipation, the universalist liberatory potential of the working class is clearly set out as an objective. Working backwards from this goal, Panitch identifies the role of the working class within the socialist project as not only a consequence of its objective oppression but as a result of the position of potential power it occupies within the relations of production, i.e., through the ability to withdraw labour power.[93] In a similar vein, in his own critique of Laclau and Mouffe, Rustin speculates that the terms on which their conception of "equivalence" might be achieved may not be class but rather "resistance to capital."[94]

Giddens builds on Marx's position in *The Jewish Question* to note the broader positive impact the emancipatory struggles of oppressed groups might have on others.

> Those who fought for the emancipation of the Jews from religious oppression and persecution were not, Marx asserted, struggling for purely sectional interests for in freeing the Jews from such oppression they were liberating

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[91] McQuarie and Spaulding, "The Concept of Power in Marxist Theory: A Critique and Reformulation," 23.

[92] For example, according to Kautsky: "Socialism as such is not our goal, but rather the abolition of every kind of exploitation or oppression, be it directed against a class, a party, a sex, or a race." Karl Kautsky, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, trans. H.J. Stenning (Ann Arbor: 1971), 3.

[93] Panitch, "The Impasse of Social Democratic Politics," 24; Bleyer, "The New Realism: A Socialist Response to the Crisis in Britain," 84.

[94] Rustin, "Absolute Voluntarism: Critique of a Post-Marxist Concept of Hegemony," 171.

> human beings as a whole. In Marx's argument this was a generalized freedom from the constraints of religion. *But one might generalize the principle yet further: struggles to emancipate oppressed groups can help liberate others by promoting attitudes of mutual tolerance which in the end could benefit everyone* [emphasis mine].[95]

Drawing on what he views as a long alternative tradition in socialist thought, Bronner stresses the "political moment" over the "empirical-structural moment" of class and calls for a new category, the "class ideal," with a new perspective rooted in a socialist ethic.[96] The ideas that Bronner and Giddens, like Rustin and Segal, can draw on are also numerous outside, or at the margins, of Marxism. The first usage of the term socialism recorded by Russell was in 1827 as applied to the followers of the English Utopian Robert Owen.[97] Raymond Williams records the first usage of the term as being in the Owenite *Cooperative Magazine* in the same year and subsequently in France in 1833.[98] Barbara Taylor documents the struggle for participatory democracy as well as women's rights undertaken by the Owenites as well as among those associated with the French Utopians, Fourier and Saint-Simon.[99] As Hirst notes, "the nineteenth century was the century of socialism, rather of social*isms*, for it offered a vast array of systems, differing as much from one another as they did the opposing liberal and free market doctrines."[100]

Wainwright draws our attention back to those Marxists who contested Lenin's perspective on class and agency or the subsequent hardening of a political instrument designed in a particular historical moment into a model relevant for all time.[101] Luxemburg simultaneously challenged Leninist vanguardism and Bernsteinian

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[95] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity; Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 230.

[96] Stephen Bronner, *Socialism Unbound* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 155-69.

[97] Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy, and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day.* (New York: Simon, 1945), 781.

[98] Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London: Flamingo, 1981), 287.

[99] Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem; Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Virago, 1983); Segal, "Whose Left: Socialism, Feminism and the Future" ; Gunder Frank and Fuentes, "Nine Theses on Social Movements," 41; Lorna Weir, "Limitations of New Social Movement Analysis," *Studies in Political Economy*, no. 40, Spring (1993): 93; Bottomore, *Political Sociology*, 505.

[100] Hirst, *Representative Democracy and its Limits*, 84.

[101] Wainwright, *Arguments for a New Left: Answering the Free-Market Right.*

revisionism while emphasizing class self-emancipation.[102] Pannekoek and Gorter were the most prominent of the Council Communists who engaged in an extended polemic with Lenin and Bolshevism.[103] Their conception of 'revolution as process' led them to fiercely oppose vanguardism and build instead on the initial role of the Russian Soviets. Against the German SDP, which was then engaged in its turn towards social democratic parliamentarism, Pannekoek argued that,

> parliamentary activity is the paradigm of struggles in which only the leaders are actively involved and in which the masses themselves play a subordinate role. ... Parliamentarism inevitably tends to inhibit the autonomous activity by the masses that is necessary for revolution.[104]

In the wake of the First World War, and social democracy's abandonment of internationalism, the Austro Marxists, led by Bauer and Adler, elaborated their own critiques of the bureaucratization and statism increasingly associated with Leninism.[105] Together with the Council Communists their perspectives were condemned by Lenin in *Left-wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder*.[106] Schecter argues the importance of this tradition, and Pannekoek's 1920 plea to Lenin and the Comintern entitled *World Revolution and Communist Tactics* in particular, which he believes outlines the key themes later raised in Western Marxist theory from Antonio Gramsci to the Frankfurt School.[107]

6. Alliance vs. Convergence: a Gramscian approach

There is no doubt that the most prominent and influential strand of this broader class-analytical tradition is that associated with Gramsci. Indeed, as we noted above, a virtual intellectual tug-of-war developed over Gramsci's theoretical legacy in the postwar period. First appropriated by Dmitrov and Togliatti to legitimize the

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[102] Stephen Bronner, *A Revolutionary for Our Times: Rosa Luxemburg* (London: Pluto Press, 1981) and Bronner, *Socialism Unbound*.

[103] Bronner, *A Revolutionary for Our Times: Rosa Luxemburg*.

[104] Quoted in Mark Shipway, "Council Communism," in *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Maximilien Rubel and John Crump (London: MacMillan Press, 1987), 110.

[105] On Austro-Marxism, see Tom Bottomore and Patrick Goode, eds., *Austro-Marxism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978).

[106] Raimund Loew, "The Politics of Austro-Marxism," *New Left Review*, no. 118 (1979).

[107] See Chapter 3 in Schecter, *Radical Theories: Paths Beyond Marxism and Social Democracy*.

Comintern's formulation of popular frontism, Gramsci was then used by Togliatti again and later Berlinguer to justify the PCI's Eurocommunist turn. Gramsci has been claimed by a range of theorists as an intellectual precursor, while some of the concepts he originated have, in some shape and form, come to play prominent roles in a number of fields, most notably International Political Economy and Cultural Studies.[108]

The concept of hegemony is at the heart of Gramsci's theoretical project. Hegemony, for Gramsci, described the combination of consent and coercion necessary to advance 'Fordism' – the phase of capitalism characterized by mass production – i.e., "an ultra-modern form of production and of working methods – such as is offered by the most advanced American variety, the industry of Henry Ford" – and mass consumption.[109] To ensure its stability and legitimation, Fordist capitalism required a range of economic, social and cultural arrangements later defined as Keynesian demand management and the Welfare State. This reading of the nature of contemporary capitalism led Gramsci to a different view of political agency from the dominant Leninist 'dual power' perspective. Rather than a frontal assault – i.e., 'war of manoeuvre' – to seize state power, Gramsci suggested a broader and more protracted 'war of position' would be necessary to shift the balance of social forces under the conditions of advanced capitalism.[110] Whereas Leninist class alliances were largely instrumental in keeping with the needs of a 'war of manoeuvre,' Gramsci's 'war of position' required 'organic alliances' of class forces in order to construct a new political subject – 'historical bloc' – with the capacity to fundamentally transform or replace the existing hegemonic project.[111] Nevertheless, Gramsci's

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[108] Donald Sassoon, *On Gramsci and other writings by Palmiro Togliatti* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979) and Forgacs, "Gramsci and Marxism in Britain." On neo-Gramscian IPE and Cultural Studies, see Introduction above.

[109] Gramsci, ed., *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 280-81; Epstein, "Rethinking Social Movement Theory," 46.

[110] Bob Jessop, *The Capitalist State: Marxist Theories and Methods* (New York: New York University Press, 1982), 150; see also William K. Carroll and Robert S. Ratner, "Between Leninism and Radical Pluralism: Gramscian Reflections on Counterhegemony and the New Social Movements," *Critical Sociology* 20, no. 2 (1994): 10.

[111] Epstein, "Rethinking Social Movement Theory," 51.

political project retained a working-class led alliance at its centre and included the formation of a mass party as the "central site and vehicle for alliances" and the capture of state power.[112]

Taken as a whole, Gramsci's Marxism is considered to avoid both the reductionism and determinism of other class-based worldviews as well as the paralysing "all encompassing and all-flattening" openness of discourse theory.[113] Moreover the combination of a 'whole system' perspective on the social formation that pays due attention to the specificity of a given historical conjuncture while focusing on the function of alliances in the development of political agency is clearly relevant to the case at hand.

7. A Theoretical Framework for Canada?

In Canada, the study of social movements has gone through its own distinctive evolution. Benefiting from a degree of 'relative autonomy' from the classical liberal tradition dominant in the United States, early analysis of Canadian social movements was rooted in a political economy approach.[114] The groundbreaking work of Lipset and Macpherson located the prairie protest movements in the context of the development of Canadian capitalism.[115] Through the sixties and seventies this political economy perspective was supplemented and transformed by an emphasis on the inequities of class, region, nation, and later, gender. Within the 'New Canadian Political Economy' that emerged out of a combination of a left-nationalist perspective

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[112] Forgacs, "Gramsci and Marxism in Britain," 86. See also Gramsci, ed., *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*; Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980); Anne Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987).

[113] Bob Jessop, "Accumulation Strategies, State Forms, and Hegemonic Projects," *Kapitalistate* 13 (1983): 108.

[114] "In English Canada, the intellectual forces that collected together to press for Canadianization' in the late 1960s and that consolidated the field of Canadian studies and reshaped the agendas of sociology and political science, were themselves part of a social movement opposing the continentalizing impact of Americanization." Carroll, "Social Movements and Counterhegemony in a Canadian Context," 2.

[115] Seymour Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950); C.B. Macpherson, *Democracy in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953).

and traditional Innisian political economy, the identification of social actors has been a continuing focus of controversy and debate.[116]

For the study of social movements, the political economy perspective – in both its older and newer variants – has been found wanting. Not unlike Marxism and, as we have argued, the NMT approach which emerged in reaction, it has tended to explain the existence and relevance of social movements, "directly from the master narrative of political economy itself, rather than by building up an understanding through close observation and theorization of actual movements."[117] More particularly, Descent et al. take English Canadian analysis of social movements to task for its failure to focus the symbolic and subjective aspects of collective identity and for an overly utilitarian assessment of social action and social actors.[118] The authors point to what they consider a more fruitful analytical framework developing in Québec influenced by European identity-oriented NMT.[119]

Responding to similar concerns, NMT has recently been increasingly preferred as an alternative approach for the study of social movements in English Canada.[120] The NMT paradigm's claim to challenge an economistic bias has gained it currency in a realm with a dominant political economy tradition and facing the looming shadow of the RMT approach so influential in American sociology. The specific popularity of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse-theoretical approach is no doubt linked to the fact that they appear to explicitly broach some of the key political dilemmas facing progressive social movements in Canada and in other western capitalist societies.

Canadian 'autonomy' being relative, both with regard to theory and to actual practice, classical pluralist theory also flourished, for the purposes of this paper the

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[116] Descent et al., *Classes sociales et mouvements sociaux au Québec et au Canada.*

[117] Carroll, "Social Movements and Counterhegemony in a Canadian Context," 4.

[118] Descent et al. argue that, historically, a combination of RM theory and Marxian political economy has been predominant in the English Canadian study of social movements Descent et al., *Classes sociales et mouvements sociaux au Québec et au Canada*, 59.

[119] Descent et al., *Classes sociales et mouvements sociaux au Québec et au Canada.*

[120] See, for example, some contributions to Carroll, "Social Movements and Counterhegemony in a Canadian Context."

most relevant manifestation being interest group theory. Given the basic assumptions of an elite pluralist paradigm, 'lobbying' is considered the natural form for interest mediation. Pross laid the basis for Canadian research in this area.[121] He defines interest groups as "organizations whose members get together to influence public policy in order to promote their common interest."[122] In his contribution to a comparative study of analysis of 'First World' interest groups, Pross notes that the Canadian experience generally "confirms pluralist theory" on this question. He nevertheless goes on to identify one exception: state sponsorship and support for many such groups.[123]

In the Canadian context, defining what constitutes an 'interest group' has proved to be as confusing a terminological conundrum as it has elsewhere. While Bashevkin views the categories developed by Pross as establishing a distinction between groups that "engage in policy advocacy and those that proceed to the level of policy participation," Phillips argues that interest groups "are willing to conform to the accepted norms of advocacy in order to achieve their desired outcomes."[124] Meanwhile, Pross himself draws a polar distinction between interest groups that "exert influence" and political parties that "exercise responsibilities of government."[125] Clearly, in this pluralist rendition of a straitjacket much of value can be lost.

Attempts by the state itself to resolve this definitional riddle have been no more helpful. This includes distinguishing between 'special interest' and 'public interest' groups. Whereas public interest groups "promote public policies which

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[121] A. Paul Pross, *Group Politics and Public Policy* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986); Paul Pross, ed., *Pressure Group Behaviour in Canadian Politics* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1975).

[122] Pross, ed., *Pressure Group Behaviour in Canadian Politics*, 2; Pross, *Group Politics and Public Policy*, 84.

[123] A. Paul Pross, "The Mirror of the State: Canada's Interest Group System," in *First World Interest Groups: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Clive Thomas (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1993), 68-69.

[124] Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: the Politics of Canadian Nationalism*, 48 and Susan D. Phillips, "New Social Movements and Unequal Representation: The Challenge of Influencing Public Policy," in *Democracy with Justice: Essays in Honour of Khayyam Zev Paltiel*, ed. Alain-G. Gagnon and A. Brian Tanguay (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1992), 262.

[125] Pross, ed., *Pressure Group Behaviour in Canadian Politics*, 24.

produce collective benefits to many Canadians," special interest groups "mainly seek to advance the material interests of members."[126] Since the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights (1982) the category of 'charter interests,' referring to organizations that advocate rights guaranteed under the Charter of Rights has been added to the mix.[127] More recently, the nomenclatural package headlined by terms like civil society and NGO has had pride of place. Here, as Morris-Suzuki describes it, the riddle becomes more like an alphabet soup cooked up in the Marx Brothers' kitchen:

> The amorphousness of the boundary between 'state' and 'civil society' has given rise to some ironic hybrids like the BONGO (Business Organized NGO) and the oxymoronic GRINGO (Government Run/Initiated NGO).[128]

Indeed, in spite of an interesting genealogy, the concept of 'civil society' has also been widely critiqued. Reviewing different definitions, Resnick suggests that civil society may very well amount to a "utopian construct" and queries the value in referring to a collection of social actors in this manner.[129] The use of the concept also unleashes yet another simplified dualism – state/civil society – that may, in the end, serve to conceal more than it explains.[130] As Hirst points out, "both state and civil society are made up of large complex organizations, and the boundary between the two is not all that clear."[131]

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[126] Peter Finkle et al., *Industry Canada: Federal Government Relations with interest groups: a Reconsideration* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1994).

[127] Ibid. A full discussion of the importance of the Charter and its relationship to social struggle is beyond the purview of this dissertation; see Michael. Mandel, *The Charter of Rights and the Legalization of Politics in Canada* (Toronto: Wall, 1989); see also Linda Cardinal, "Les mouvements sociaux et la Charte canadienne des droits et libertes," *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, no. 7-8 (1993).

[128] Teresa Morris-Suzuki, "For and Against NGO's: the politics of the lived world," *New Left Review* 2, no. 2 (2000): 69.

[129] Philip Resnick, *Twenty First Century Democracy* (Montreal: McGill Queens University Press, 1997), 107.

[130] "Civil society is just such a projection of our desires. Worse, it gravely misdescribes the world we actually confront. As a concept, it has almost no specific gravity. It is little better than a Rorschach blot, the interpretations of which have been so massaged and expanded over the past fifteen years that the term has come to signify everything – which is to say nothing." David Rieff, "The False Dawn of Civil Society," *The Nation*, 22 February 1999.

[131] Paul Hirst, "Democracy and Civil Society," in *Reinventing Democracy*, ed. Paul Hirst and Sunil Khilnani (Oxford: Basil Blackwell/ The Political Quarterly, 1996), 99.

Returning to interest group theory, Phillips points out that "this focus also has a limitation, because [it] has had little to say about activities other than lobbying and the provision of selective incentives."[132] Schwartz describes it thus:

> An interest group centres around a set of paid organizers who seek to accomplish social change through direct contact with the institutional leaders responsible for policy.[133]

This approach has little to offer for the analysis of coalition formation given its narrow rational choice assumptions and simplistic understanding of social mobilization.

When it comes to the study of coalition formation or movement convergence it is not surprising that the strengths and weaknesses that the RMT and NMT frameworks exhibited elsewhere have been replicated in the Canadian context. Dennis Howlett, for example, draws on the concepts of expansive hegemony and chains of equivalence put forward by Laclau and Mouffe to argue that in the Canadian context:

> Coalition building is a key to the political success of each of the social movements struggles as well as critical to whether the politics of social movement struggles are merely populist/reformist or radical /transformational.[134]

Others have used a discourse-theoretical analysis to deepen the understanding of a variety of social identities.[135] Meanwhile the work of some Canadian proponents of a discourse-theoretical approach highlights the depth of the contradiction at the heart of Laclau and Mouffe's argumentation and thus its limits. For example, Magnusson and Walker challenge Laclau and Mouffe's reintroduction of an "essentialist unity":

> They (Laclau and Mouffe) may not want a working class party, but they do want a counterhegemonic force to contend with capitalist hegemony. Recognizing the unity of capital and the diversity of the social movements that respond to it, they want somehow to reduce that diversity to a unity – to

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[132] Phillips, "New Social Movements and Unequal Representation: The Challenge of Influencing Public Policy," 24.

[133] Michael Schwartz and Shuva Paul, "Resource Mobilization versus the Mobilization of People: Why Consensus Movements Cannot be Instruments," in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, ed. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 221-22.

[134] Dennis Howlett, "Social Movement Coalitions: New Possibilities for Social Change," *Canadian Dimension*, November-December 1989, 129.

[135] See, for example, Carroll, "Social Movements and Counterhegemony in a Canadian Context," and Carroll, ed., *Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice.*

> hegemonize it – and so to create a unified force capable of overcoming capital itself... [136]

Indeed Magnusson puts himself squarely in the anti-hegemonic camp of discourse theorists with his explicit criticisms of any attempt to articulate together a plurality of struggles:

> Even thinkers like Laclau and Mouffe, who have tried hard to break free from the monologic of the struggle for socialism, fall back on the idea that there must be a "chain of equivalences" that links the various struggles in which we must engage. This betrays the continuing influence of the logic of identity. There may be no equivalences – no way of relating our need for living well now to our duty to maintain the diversity of life on earth.[137]

The propensity of NMT formulations to see these movements as oriented towards lifestyles, focusing exclusively on cultural aspects, and finally, viewing civil society as their only field of activity, is a serious weakness in the Canadian context. There is overwhelming evidence that 'new' movements such as the women's, ecological, native, peace and lesbian and gay movements operate on a terrain which includes, at a minimum, interaction with the state either in defence of acquired rights or to make new gains, and at times within state structures themselves.[138] This reality poses serious problems for the dramatic, polarized relationship NMT tends to draw between old and new movements. [139] And while the focus on social identities and

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[136] Warren Magnusson and R.J. Walker, "De-centring the State: Political Theory and Canadian Political Economy," *Studies in Political Economy* 26 (1988): 46.

[137] Warren Magnusson, "Decentring the State, or Looking for Politics," in *Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice*, ed. William K. Carroll (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1992), 79.

[138] See *inter alia* Weir, "Limitations of New Social Movement Analysis," 87; Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change;* on First Nations, see Long, "Culture, Ideology, and Militancy: The Movement of Native Indians in Canada, 1969-91"; on the peace movement, see David Langille, "Building an Effective Peace Movement: One Perspective," in *Social Movements/Social Change: The Politics and Practice of Organizing*, ed. Frank Cunningham, et al., *Socialist Studies* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988); on the environmental movement, see Thomas Conway, "Sustainable Development and the Challenges Facing Canadian Environmental Groups in the 1990s," in *Democracy with Justice: Essays in Honour of Khayyam Zev Paltiel*, ed. Alain-G. Gagnon and A. Brian Tanguay (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1992); Gary Kinsman, "Managing AIDS Organizing: 'Consultation,' 'Partnership,' and the National Aids Strategy," in *Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice*, ed. William K. Carroll (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1992).

[139] Olofsson's distinction between new movements oriented towards "cultural revolution" and others working for the "defence of real social consumption" is of some interest though it appears to effectively undermine the very need for a category of 'new' movements. Gunnar Olofsson, "After the Working Class Movement? An Essay on What's "New" and What's "Social " in the New Social Movements," *Acta Sociologica* 31 (1988).

their formation is a powerful asset of New Movement Theory and its discourse-theoretical variant, it is accompanied by an overwhelming confusion on the question of political agency.

In contrast, because it is rooted in historical and organizational analysis the Resource Mobilization approach allows for an assessment of continuity both over time and across movements. As a result, an emphasis on commonalities between old and new social movements and linkages between different constituencies emerges, while simplistic and dichotomous characterizations of relationships such as that between political parties and social movements are generally avoided.

The focus on social movement organizations and social movement sectors has proven particularly useful for the study of feminist organizations in Canada. Phillips uses social network analysis to demonstrate the level of integration that has developed in the Canadian women's movement. In so doing she highlights the role of action and structure, and not merely identity, in the construction of "meaning."[140] Vickers and Bashevkin, like Phillips, have used variants of organizational theory to assess the Canadian women's movement. In their study of NAC, Vickers et al. are expressly attentive to the variety of discourses brought to NAC by participants and how their interactions, as well as issues of structure, affect NAC's future prospects.[141]

Gunder Frank and Fuentes' identification of the inheritance of organizational capacity and leadership from old movements (e.g. labour and church) as a "new characteristic of many contemporary social movements" is also valuable in the Canadian context: "A new characteristic of many contemporary social movements, however, is that – beyond their spontaneous-appearing changeability and adaptability – they inherit organizational capacity and leadership from old labour movements, political parties, churches and other organizations, from which they draw leadership cadres who became disillusioned with the limitations of the old forms and who seek to build new ones. This organizational input into the new social movements may be an important asset for them, compared to their historical, more amateurishly (dis) organized, forerunners but it may also contain the seeds of future institutionalization of some contemporary movements." Gunder Frank and Fuentes, "Nine Theses on Social Movements," 29. On this theme, see also Bert Klandermans, *Organizing for Change: Social Movement Organizations in Europe and the United States*, vol. 2, *International Social Movement Research* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1989), 10.

[140] Susan D. Phillips, "Meaning and Structure in Social Movements: Mapping the Network of National Canadian Women's Organizations," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* XXIV, no. 4, December (1991): 757.

[141] Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women* and Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: the Politics of Canadian Nationalism.*

In attempting to build some distance from the traditional interest group approach, Phillips draws a distinction "in the nature of representation itself." Whereas interests are "struggles of specificity," the politics of identity are "struggles of imagination and connectivity through which collective identities are created and new political spaces are opened."[142] She also adopts the concept of New Social Movement Organizations (NSMOs), symbolically and practically pointing to a possible synthesis of the dominant paradigms.[143]

Unfortunately, studies primarily grounded in Resource Mobilization Theory tend to remain limited by a bias to quantitative analysis and, more specifically, a quasi-mathematical calculus of resource maximization. Bashevkin's cost-benefit analysis of NAC's participation in the fight against the Canada-U.S. FTA reflects this weakness.[144] As MacAdam remarks *in extremis*, "In some hands, this perspective reads like little more than an organizer's manual on fundraising."[145]

Overall, it is quite clear that in the Canadian context as elsewhere neither RMT nor NMT provide all the tools necessary for the study of social movement coalition formation. While New Movement Theory can help to introduce a necessary corrective to the more ham-fisted variants of class-analytical and political economy approaches and to the organizational focus of RMT, it cannot deal with the structural issues raised by social movement coalitions or the process of identity formation at the heart of movement convergence.

Thanks to their grounding in organizational theory, some incarnations of RMT are useful for understanding the factors underlying social movement coalition formation, maintenance and decline. Also, the broader context established by the notion of a Social Movement Sector and through the conception of a structure of

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[142] Phillips, "New Social Movements and Unequal Representation: The Challenge of Influencing Public Policy," 255-6.

[143] 'New' social movements do self-organize though Phillips argues they do so differently: "NSMO's cannot act as conventional lobbyists, and in many cases, do not have the inclination to do so." Ibid., 257.

[144] Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: the Politics of Canadian Nationalism.*

[145] MacAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*, 1.

political opportunities seems promising. And yet, this approach still generally fails to fully consider the importance of discourse and agency. Nevertheless, in their respective studies of NAC, Vickers et al. and Phillips demonstrate the potential for organizational theory to be enhanced by an attentive ear to discourse which, the case of the NAC demonstrates, is a key element in coalition formation, mandating and survival.

Despite their dominant status in academia, RMT and NMT are not the only perspectives on offer for the study of social movement coalitions. We now move on to consider some other theoretical frameworks, or elements thereof, that have either emerged out of, or been strongly influenced by, Canadian experience and analysis.

8. The Popular Sector: a Canadian Alternative?

Introducing their 1985 collection of briefs presented to the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada (MacDonald Commission), Drache and Cameron argued that an alternative consensus was emerging:

> It is a consensus of what we call "the popular sector": churches, trade unions, women's groups, social agencies and organizations representing Native People, farmers and the disadvantaged. This fundamental regrouping of forces represents an alternative to the rigidities of Canada's two-and-a-half party system and the simple two-class model of society. In a period when Canadian society is supposedly shifting to the right, there are more forces ready for social change than either the general public or the traditional left can recognize.[146]

While the popular sector concept was not subsequently further developed theoretically, it has been widely used by Canadian social movement students and activists alike.[147]

Drache and Cameron's conception of the popular sector has a number of strengths. First, as a broader construct around the activities of social movements and

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[146] Drache and Cameron, eds., *The Other MacDonald Report*, ix.

[147] Cameron explains the use of the term popular: "because they represent people, and because they mostly have some form of democratic operating procedure." Duncan Cameron, "A Game With New Rules," *This Magazine*, March/April 1988, 22.

social movement organizations, it challenges the traditional pluralist categorizing of organized interests other than political parties as 'interest groups' or 'pressure groups.' It is a framework for the study of the interaction of movements and their organizations that need not succumb to simplistic categorizations like those based on degrees of institutionalization rooted in a reductionist movement/institution polarity.[148]

Second, Drache and Cameron clearly tie the political discourse of the popular sector to social struggle recognizing that its relevance is only fully understood when it is rooted in the social experience out of which the discourse emerges. They place the popular sector's discourse exactly in this context:

> Reflecting the increased ideological conflict engendered in Canada by the economic crisis, groups unhappy with reliance on market and state rationality for the resolution of social problems began to use a new language in public debate. *This political discourse was generated by the struggle between capital and labour, by women struggling on their own behalf* and by native peoples, farm groups, social agencies, churches, environmentalists, peace activists, youth, and seniors [emphasis mine].

They emphasize further:

> The true importance of popular-sector discourse however is its social foundation. It springs from the opposition of many groups to what has become the new orthodoxy in government: neo-liberalism. Ideological conflict arises out of practical struggles for concrete objectives.[149]

Drache and Cameron do not succumb to a determinism that sees identities and discourses as being 'read off' of economic structures in what Tarrow describes as the

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[148] Olofsson sees the difference between old and new social movements as "partly overlapping a famous conceptual pair in social theory; the polarity movement-institution." Olofsson, "After the Working Class Movement? An Essay on What's "New" and What's "Social " in the New Social Movements." Pross and other interest group theorists propose yet another conceptual pair: party-interest group. Pross, ed., *Pressure Group Behaviour in Canadian Politics*, 3. In this company, the distinction drawn between social movements and social movement organizations or SMO's bears a considerable comparative advantage as an analytical tool. See for example McCarthy and Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," 1217-18.

"Although movements are inchoate and movement organizations are purposive, the relationships between them cannot be reduced to the symmetry between spontaneity and consciousness." Tarrow, "Struggle, Politics and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements, and Cycles of Protest," 18.

[149] Duncan Cameron, "Political Discourse in the Eighties," in *Canadian Parties in Transition: Discourse, Organization, Representation*, ed. Alain G. Gagnon and A. Brian Tanguay (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1989), 74-75.

"transmission belt" view of politics.[150] Rather, social as well as political identities emerge out of the struggles actors engage in, influenced, of course, by their social and economic location.

The popular sector concept also seeks to move beyond tactical alliances to identify convergence and recognizes the possibility that a broader – indeed universal – emancipatory vision, and not merely the maximization of resources, might underlie this convergence. Along with a general lack of theoretical elaboration, it is perhaps this last characteristic that leads Drache and Cameron to make rather ambitious claims on behalf of the popular sector. These include posing an alternative to the traditional political system, sharing an alternative discourse and bearing transformative as opposed to reformist political demands.[151] In retrospect, it seems possible that Drache and Cameron have overestimated the depth and breadth of the consensual alternative discourse that developed within the popular sector. Indeed, their enthusiastic account – to wit, "the groups active in these coalitions are Canada's counter-institutions, and they draw on a counter-discourse of political economy" – must be placed into proper context.[152] While the labour, women's and ecumenical social justice movements' views of developments in contemporary capitalism were increasingly similar as Canada entered a prolonged period of economic crisis in the 1970s, differences in analysis and in prescription clearly remained. The notion that a clear alternative vision emerged, only a decade later, out of presentations by popular sector groups to the Macdonald Commission in 1982-84 has been challenged. Assessing the situation from a vantage point five years on, Jenson describes the very real limits of the consensus achieved by these groups:

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[150] Tarrow, "National Politics and Collective Action: A Review of Recent Research in Western Europe and the United States," 423.

[151] "Coalition building, though difficult to work out in the face of important differences among groups is the favoured strategy for political intervention. In contrast to the neo-interventionists, the popular sector practices transformative politics rather than reformism. Politically, its rallying points have been full employment rather than welfare, more national self-reliance rather than increased dependence on export markets, and democratic control over decision-making rather than attachment to technical knowledge and management rationality."Cameron, "Political Discourse in the Eighties," 74-75.

[152] Drache and Cameron, eds., *The Other MacDonald Report*, ix.

> A broad-based coalition of the popular sector insists upon using nation-building language to describe its alternative future...The alternative they propose, however, remains underdeveloped and defensive; it cannot yet claim to be a clearly articulated paradigm for future social relations.[153]

Jenson challenges the transformative potential – let alone the transformational character – of an alternative discourse that is "poorly linked to any real comprehension of the innovations in production relations." As a result she reasserts the importance of studying the formation of social and political identities by identifying social and economic locations and placing all of this within a broader analysis of developments in modes of production and regulation.[154]

The question of identity is placed in context when Jenson reminds us that identity politics are not the exclusive purview of new social movements but rather that all politics have in fact always been about identities.[155] For Jenson, identities emerge in discursive struggle:

> Politics is about conflict over or acceptance of collective identities – about who has a right to make claims – as much as it concerns conflict among groups and organizations over disputed claims about who gets what, when and how. The terrain on which actors struggle for representation is the universe of political discourse, a space in which socially constructed identities emerge in discursive struggle.[156]

With the recognition of the plurality of groups and interests engaging in this process comes an acknowledgment of the popular sector as a space or terrain for discursive struggle and identity formation. Identifiable relationships, processes, and institutions define this terrain or space; it is a material network, not merely a theoretical construct.

The constituencies Drache and Cameron identify as part of the popular sector engage in discursive struggle, initially through a series of relatively *ad hoc* relationships, both organizational and personal, and later in more formal relationships which are themselves issue of this struggle. As they form cross-sectoral coalitions

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[153] Jane Jenson, "All the World's a Stage: Ideas, Spaces and Times in Canadian Political Economy," *Studies in Political Economy*, no. 36, Fall (1991): 65.

[154] Ibid.; see also Greg Albo and Donald Swartz, "The Free Trade Papers," *Studies in Political Economy*, no. 24, Autumn (1987).

[155] Jenson, "All the World's a Stage: Ideas, Spaces and Times in Canadian Political Economy," 48.

[156] Jenson, "Representations in Crisis: The Roots of Canada's Permeable Fordism," 663; Jenson, "All the World's a Stage: Ideas, Spaces and Times in Canadian Political Economy," 52.

around single issues, and at times on the basis of a broader common agenda, these actors engage in the definition and redefinition of their own social and political identities and discourses *as well as* the collective identity and discourse of these specific moments of convergence (i.e., coalitions and alliances) and of the popular sector as a whole. An emerging and evolving common discourse, combined with developing personal and institutional relationships, lays the basis for yet further identity formation and for collective action.

The limits to the discourse and identity of a given movement are not influenced by its social and economic location alone. The process of identity formation through the day-to-day activities of movement building itself sets further constraints. As Brenner notes:

> Worldviews are carried by groups who by their social location and experience, their everyday experience as well as their experience in reform movements, are more or less open to one set of ideas or another.[157]

Contrary to discourse theory, which posits identity as entirely indeterminate and therefore all relationships as possible,[158] Phillips points out that the collective identity of a movement,

> provides a structure in which only some political discourses are possible, in which only some, but not all, issues can be supported as causes of the movement, and in which only some actions are possible.[159]

In a more positive vein, approaching the question from the perspective of proponents of coalition building, the editors of a collection of studies of a dozen contemporary social movements argue that:

> Coalition politics link and integrate struggles and ideally help each constituent to broaden consciousness of the others oppression, and to take seriously a much wider range of issues than it otherwise might.[160]

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[157] Johanna Brenner, "Feminism's Revolutionary Promise: Finding Hope in Hard Times," in *Socialist Register 1989: Revolution Today, Aspirations and Realities*, ed. Ralph Miliband, Leo Panitch, and John Saville (London: Merlin Press, 1989), 247.

[158] See, for example, Mouzelis, "Marxism or Post-Marxism?"

[159] Phillips, "Meaning and Structure in Social Movements: Mapping the Network of National Canadian Women's Organizations," 780.

[160] Frank Cunningham et al., eds., *Social Movements/Social Change: The Politics and Practice of Organizing, Socialist Studies* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988), 25.

The space where movements and their organizations interact is both relatively more forgiving and more limiting than that within a given social movement on this score. A well-developed terrain for interaction is certainly a propitious ground for solidarity and learning and is therefore likely to facilitate ongoing discursive and political convergence. But movements and their organizations bring with them substantial baggage. This includes previously, if not permanently, formed identities, generated by social and economic location, through struggle, as well as distinct organizational cultures and styles. All of these factors pose real limits to the possible discursive and strategic outcomes.

The formation of a social movement coalition inevitably involves some level of discursive struggle and the potential to create new political identities bearing an alternative discourse. Coalition building also involves maximizing the collective *political resources* of participating movements as well as resource maximization in a more traditional sense.[161] It is therefore also a process of inter and intra-organizational struggle with organized movements bearing not only discourses but distinct organizational traditions, decision-making styles, and approaches to resourcing and tactics.

An analysis that hopes to predict the outcome and understand the scope and complexity of coalition formation must be informed by the micro-level focus of organizational theory drawing attention to the "importance of strategic-instrumental action" and "highlight(ing) the contingency of democratic structure development."[162]

9. A Neo-Gramscian Counterhegemonic Project?

Moving beyond both the limited rational choice conception of resource maximization and crass Marxian economism as the sole relevant calculations of

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[161] Flacks gives an example of what could be considered coalition formation for the maximization of political resources in the American context: "In recent years, movement activists have worked toward coalition to find the numbers and leverage necessary to advance a credible program largely to defend against the Reaganite effort to destroy the rights and reverse the gains won in earlier struggles." Dick Flacks, "The Revolution of Citizenship," *Social Policy*, no. Fall (1990): 46.

[162] Canel, "New Social Movement Theory and Resource Mobilization: the Need for Integration," 45-46.

collective action means going further than a politicized definition of self-interest. The discourse and policy positions of many popular sector groups include explicit commitments to broader emancipatory goals for their own constituencies *as well as for others.*[163] As we have seen above, an ideological commitment to a broader emancipatory project has imbued a long history of socialist and radical theories and practices.

Assessing the prospects for this broader project is at the heart of the neo-Gramscian enterprise. In contrast with Laclau and Mouffe's discourse-theoretical interpretation, neo-Gramscians maintain the continuing relevance of class and the essential, if not dominant, role of the working class in this political project.[164] They expand on the central Gramscian concepts of hegemony and, more particularly, counterhegemony, reflecting the "practical need for subordinate groups to move beyond a defensive understanding of their own immediate interests, to create their own hegemonic conception of the 'general interest'."[165] Two critical traits of the neo-Gramscian approach are reflected here. First, it is highly normative. This is made clear by the centrality of the notion of counterhegemony – i.e., "aspiring to build consensus around an emancipatory project."[166] Second, in keeping with Gramsci's own rejection of determinism, it maintains a dialectical relation between agency and structure – "articulating the actor to real processes of structural transformation" – and highlights the "interdependence of subject and object."[167]

Given this sophisticated understanding of the relationship between agency and structure and its conception of a convergence of forces around a broad transformative

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[163] See Chapters 1 and 3.

[164] See, for example, Chapter 6 in Boggs, *Social Movements and Political Power.*

[165] William Carroll, "Restructuring Capital, Reorganizing Consent: Gramsci, Political Economy and Canada," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 27, no. 3 (1990): 392.

[166] Carroll and Ratner, "Between Leninism and Radical Pluralism: Gramscian Reflections on Counterhegemony and the New Social Movements," 13.

[167] Henri Lustiger-Thaler, "New Social Movement Discourse: the Unsolved Democracy," in *Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice*, ed. William K. Carroll (Toronto: Garamond, 1992), 176; Carroll and Ratner, "Between Leninism and Radical Pluralism: Gramscian Reflections on Counterhegemony and the New Social Movements," 15; see also Boggs, *Social Movements and Political Power*, 19 and Carroll, "Restructuring Capital, Reorganizing Consent: Gramsci, Political Economy and Canada," 393.

political project, Carroll and Ratner have argued that a neo-Gramscian viewpoint offers the best prospect for analyzing contemporary social movements.[168] More broadly, Carroll proposes a Gramscian reinterpretation of political economy that "may be said to mediate between abstract structures of capital and concrete instances of agency" and consequently, generate an analysis of the transformation of capital and consent as well as an appraisal of "the opportunities that these changes present for emancipatory movements."[169]

9.1 B.C. Solidarity

Carroll and Ratner use this neo-Gramscian perspective to assess British Columbia's Solidarity, a major cross-sectoral coalition that developed at the provincial level.[170] After establishing the historical conjuncture, including the specificity of the province of British Columbia in Canada's political economy and the nature of the crisis faced in the early 1980s, the authors proceed to identify the strategies and tactics adopted by capital and the state to deal with the crisis, and to assess the responses of labour and other social movements.

The crisis facing the Fordist hegemonic project built around mass production and consumption and an expansive KWS took on specific characteristics in a regional economy heavily dependent on export-oriented resource extraction. While the openness of BC's economy amplified the impact of the 1981-82 recession, it had also been a factor in provincial politics being "clearly framed in terms of capital-labor struggle for most of the twentieth century."[171] A strong labour movement led to the election of a first NDP government in 1972 that introduced a series of reforms that

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[168] Carroll and Ratner, "Social Democracy, Neo-Conservatism and Hegemonic Crisis in British Columbia,"; Carroll, "Restructuring Capital, Reorganizing Consent: Gramsci, Political Economy and Canada"; William K. Carroll, "Social Movements and Counterhegemony: Canadian Contexts and Social Theories," in *Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice*, ed. William K. Carroll (Toronto: Garamond, 1997).

[169] Carroll, "Restructuring Capital, Reorganizing Consent: Gramsci, Political Economy and Canada," 393, 90.

[170] Carroll and Ratner, "Social Democracy, Neo-Conservatism and Hegemonic Crisis in British Columbia."

[171] Ibid.: 33.

"strengthened labor's position but also provoked a counter-mobilization in both the ideological and political fields."[172] This counter-mobilization included the founding of the Fraser Institute, which became the intellectual vanguard of neo-conservatism in Canada, and the reunification of the political right under the banner of the Social Credit Party, which reclaimed power in 1975. Until the end of the decade, a buoyant economy moderated the Social Credit government's policies, but the fiscal crisis of 1981-82 opened the door to a major assault on the postwar social contract. When the Social Credit Party won a second term in government in 1983, it set about implementing an aggressive and highly ideological program. The government announced a series of measures placing it at the forefront of neo-conservatism side by side with Thatcherism and Reaganomics. These included an austerity budget and twenty-six pieces of legislation which, among other things, radically limited the bargaining rights of provincial public employees, gave employers in the public sector the right to fire employees upon expiration of collective agreements and abolished the province's human rights commission. Within days of the announcement of these and other measures, meetings and demonstrations swept the province leading eventually to the formation of the Solidarity Coalition.[173] As Carroll and Ratner conclude: "The highly visible means and ends of government austerity thus forged a conjunctural basis of unity between organized labour and a wide range of popular-democratic forces."[174]

While this new grouping brought together a broad spectrum of opposition, it also raised a number of problems. The Solidarity Coalition was closely tied to the B.C. Federation of Labour's own labour-based Operation Solidarity and the coalition's structure was topped off by a triumvirate of co-chairs: Art Kube, president of the Federation and head of Operation Solidarity, and two community (i.e., non-

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[172] Ibid.: 34.

[173] Peter Bleyer, "Coalition Building and the Canadian Popular Sector," in *From Resistance to Transformation: Coalition Struggles in Canada, South Africa, the Philippines and Mexico* (Ottawa: Canada-Philippines Human Resources Development Program, 1996).

[174] Carroll and Ratner, "Social Democracy, Neo-Conservatism and Hegemonic Crisis in British Columbia," 38.

labour) representatives. While the co-chairs and a steering group were responsible to an assembly of groups from across the province, the coalition was almost entirely dependent on the Federation and Operation Solidarity for its funding and seconded staff.[175] The result was a coalition which combined grassroots initiatives with a 'top-down' process dominated by provincial labour bodies still largely committed to a narrow electoralist political strategy of support for the NDP.[176]

Among the positive attributes of the Solidarity experience, Carroll and Ratner highlight the bringing together of workers in the public service with 'clients' of the welfare state and activists in other social movements. As a result, Solidarity "contained the promise of moving beyond a defence of the Fordist project toward counterhegemonic politics."[177] Unfortunately, neither Solidarity nor a subsequent mobilization against yet another wave of austerity measures in 1987 met this potential. Carroll and Ratner attribute this failure to an inability to move from a war of manoeuvre to a war of position wherein a counterhegemonic principle or collective will is formulated. Not moving beyond reactive fightback discourse and tactics to a longer-term strategy where new relationships are developed and alternatives proposed, precluded the formation of a historical bloc.[178] At the most superficial level, this was reflected in the shopping list approach to issues adopted by Solidarity with no priorities assigned. Carroll and Ratner also identify the labour movement's strong attachment to social democratic electoralism as a significant barrier to Solidarity becoming more than a tactical conjunctural alliance with a rather mechanical and opportunistic character.[179]

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[175] Bleyer, "Coalition Building and the Canadian Popular Sector."

[176] Carroll and Ratner, "Social Democracy, Neo-Conservatism and Hegemonic Crisis in British Columbia."

[177] Ibid.: 46.

[178] Ibid.

[179] Ibid.: 46-47; Panitch and Swartz add: "...obsessive electoralism led to the extra parliamentary mobilization of the coalition being set aside in favour of relying on the electoral prospects of the NDP 'next time'." Panitch and Swartz, *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms: From Wage Controls to Social Contract*, 151.

Palmer provides a somewhat different perspective on the B.C. Solidarity experience.[180] Like Carroll and Ratner, as well as Panitch and Swartz, he concludes that Solidarity's failure was rooted in the labour movement's commitment to social democratic reformism and electoralism. As a counterpoint to "those who champion the capacity of the new social movements to displace the working class as the central agent of social change," Palmer develops a spirited defence of working class leadership. He argues, "without the material power of the working class, the various 'sectors' are ultimately impotent when confronted with the force and resources of the capitalist order."[181] Palmer goes a step further to launch a spirited defence of revolutionary 'vanguardism' quoting Lenin's comments on the Russian Soviets:

> How inadequate a temporary non-partisan organization is, which at best, may supplement a stable and durable militant organization of a party, but can never replace it.[182]

From a traditional class-analytical point of view, Palmer constructs an interesting account of Solidarity and develops a clear answer to the question "What went wrong?" While Palmer reinforces the point that spontaneity is not sufficient, that organization and *leadership* – though, of course, not beholden to "reformism" – are required, much else of import is lost in the analysis and the conclusions reached are, not surprisingly, far too simple. The complexity and contingency of democratic development demands a much more delicate touch than this.

10. The FTA and the Popular Sector

At the pan-Canadian level the neo-conservative project took on a similar if necessarily different character. While it also aimed to push back the bounds of the public sector through privatization and to 'free-up the market' via deregulation, it adopted as its centrepiece a bilateral trade agreement with the United States – the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement – or as then U.S. president Ronald Reagan put it, "a new economic constitution for North America."

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[180] Bryan Palmer, *Solidarity: The Rise and Fall of an Opposition in British Columbia* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1987).

[181] Ibid., 103.

[182] Quoted in ibid., 105.

Proponents – the federal Conservative government, neo-conservative think-tanks and business associations – promoted the FTA as a means of securing access to the American market, boosting economic growth and employment and keeping consumer prices down. All of this was to be achieved by rationalizing and restructuring the Canadian economy within a North American framework. Critics meanwhile noted the profound impact the FTA would have on Canada's socio-economic development. They identified a 'hidden agenda' behind the agreement – a 'levelling of the North American playing field' which would threaten social and regional development programs as they were defined as 'unfair subsidies' or 'non-tariff barriers' to trade. Downward pressure on the social wage would accompany cuts in real wages, and the Canadian State's already severely circumscribed ability to intervene in the economy, for example through the development of industrial policy, would be further constrained, if not entirely eliminated, by provisions such as those according 'national treatment' to U.S-based firms.[183]

Carroll argues that while the FTA did pre-empt future policy options, it "avoided an open declaration of war on the Fordist bloc."[184] Consequently, he suggests that the Gramscian concept of 'passive revolution' is an apt description for the Canadian neo-conservative strategy developed with free trade as its centrepiece.[185] First formulated by Gramsci in his Prison Notebooks, the passive revolution has been defined as an alternative strategic option that falls short of an expansive hegemony while avoiding the full frontal assault characteristic of a war of manoeuvre. Jessop sees this strategy as involving the "reorganization of social relations (revolution) while neutralizing and channelling popular initiatives in favour of the continued domination of the political leadership (passive)."[186] Whereas an expansive hegemony

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[183] See *inter alia* Duncan Cameron, ed., *The Free Trade Papers* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1986); Duncan Cameron, ed., *The Free Trade Deal* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1988); Ed Finn, John Calvert, and Duncan Cameron, eds., *The Facts on Free Trade* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1988); Laxer, *Leap of Faith: Free Trade and the Future of Canada.*

[184] Carroll, "Restructuring Capital, Reorganizing Consent: Gramsci, Political Economy and Canada," 407.

[185] Ibid.

[186] Jessop, *State Theory: Putting Capitalist States in their Place*, 213; see also Buci-Glucksmann,

such as that developed around Fordism provides real benefits as a trade-off for popular participation, a passive revolution imposes the interests of dominant forces on the rest of society through a war of position where popular gains, if there are any, are achieved through a mechanical game of compromise.[187]

The FTA's place at the centre of the neo-conservative agenda was to some extent indicative of the need to introduce the latter through the "back door" or by the introduction of a "Trojan horse."[188] Grinspun and Cameron argue that trade agreements such as the FTA constitute a novel and permanent form of "conditioning framework" which they define as "a mechanism that effectively restricts policy choices and promotes a certain policy package at the nation-state level."[189] Indeed, the leading lights of the increasingly neo-conservative think tank, the C.D. Howe Institute (CDHI), argued that trade agreements should be pursued in order to "make it more difficult to shield the domestic economy from the effects of change."[190] Representatives of the Canadian Manufacturers Association (CMA), quoted by Rocher to back his claim that business groups were clear as to the consequences of a bilateral trade agreement, are worth citing at length:

> It is simply a fact that, as we ask our industries to compete toe to toe with American industry under a full free product flow basis, we in Canada are obviously forced to create the same conditions in Canada that exist in the US whether it is the unemployment insurance, Workmen's Compensation, the cost of government, the level of taxation, or whatever. The whole socio-economic policy environment would have to be reasonably comparable with that of the US in order to give Canadian industry a reasonable chance to manufacture at a competitive cost, and that means that we would have less freedom to create in Canada an environment that is very much different from that which exists in

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Gramsci and the State; and Jessop, *The Capitalist State: Marxist Theories and Methods.*

[187] Jessop, *State Theory: Putting Capitalist States in their Place*, 213.

[188] This argument is presented in a number of places including Ramesh Mishra, *The Welfare State in Capitalist Society: Policies of Retrenchment and Maintenance in Europe, North America and Australia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 77; Wolfe, "The Canadian State in Comparative Perspective," 120; Leo Panitch, "Capitalist Restructuring and Labour Strategies," *Studies in Political Economy* 24, no. Autumn (1987): 143; Cameron, ed., *The Free Trade Papers*, xli; and Mel Hurtig, *The Betrayal of Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1991).

[189] Ricardo Grinspun and Maxwell A. Cameron, "The Politics of North American Integration: Diverse Perspectives, Converging Criticisms," in *The Political Economy of North American Free Trade*, ed. Ricardo Grinspun and Maxwell A. Cameron (Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 1993).

[190] Quoted in Ernst, "From Liberal Continentalism to Neoconservatism: North American Free Trade and the Politics of the C.D. Howe Institute," 131.

> the United States. Basically, I think that is what we are really talking about. ultimately, as a country when we talk about free trade.[191]
>
> Canada and the US have mutually agreed to play the game by the rules and to consult each other, which should accentuate competition and real comparative advantages. Are these constraints acceptable? From the point of view of the CMA's philosophy, the answer is yes for this agreement will *bring us closer to a market-based economy, de-politicize economic decisions and eliminate generally unproductive and discriminatory state interventions* [emphasis mine].[192]

In Canada, neo-liberalism or neo-conservatism initially rejected, but soon reconsidered and courted bilateral free trade. During its first term (1984-88) the federal Conservative government was confronted by continuing public support for key programs and institutions of the KWS. This was most graphically demonstrated in 1985 when strong opposition to the de-indexation of old age pensions proposed in the federal budget forced the government to retreat on this front. Dramatic examples of this support included senior citizens demonstrating against the measure on Parliament Hill and of one in particular, Solange Denis, posing the consequences of de-indexing to the Prime-Minister's career as "Goodbye Charlie Brown" on national television.[193]

In his quest for the Progressive Conservative Party's leadership in 1983, Brian Mulroney explicitly opposed bilateral free trade. By 26 September 1985, when he rose in the House of Commons to announce that the two countries would be exploring options in this direction, Mulroney had become "free trade's cheerleader."[194]

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[191] Quoted in François Rocher, "Canadian Business, Free Trade and the Rhetoric of Economic Continentalism," *Studies in Political Economy* 35, no. Summer (1991): 143.

[192] Quoted in ibid.: 144.

[193] Claude Galipeau, "Political Parties, Interest Groups, and New Social Movements: Toward New Representation," in *Canadian Politics in Transition*, ed. Alain G. Gagnon and Brian A. Tanguay (Toronto: Nelson, 1989), 408; Stephen McBride and John Shields, *Dismantling a Nation: Canada and the New World Order* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1993); Mishra, *The Welfare State in Capitalist Society: Policies of Retrenchment and Maintenance in Europe, North America and Australia.*

[194] Cameron, ed., *The Free Trade Papers*; Glen Williams, *Not for Export: Toward a Political Economy of Canada's Arrested Industrialization* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987). Williams' analysis focused primarily on Canadian capital protecting its access to the US market and consequently failed to realize the full scope of the objectives aimed by capital and its political allies under an FTA. For example, with regard to upcoming trade negotiations, Williams argues as follows: "If they [the Tories], or the bureaucrats that advise them, discover that the logic of the current negotiation process can do little to provide them with the leverage they will need to extract a better deal for Canada from the multinationals, or, worse, that a free trade pact will institutionally remove whatever leverage Canadian governments did have in the past to ensure minimum performance standards, we could see our position in the treaty talks evolve into nothing more than a desire for a symbolic statement of free and fair trade principles between the two countries." Williams, *Not for Export: Toward a Political Economy of Canada's Arrested Industrialization*, 186.

Canada's federal system with its division of constitutional powers was a further factor mitigating the introduction of austerity measures and marketization. While jurisdiction over key sectors of the KWS such as health and education opened the door to these policies in a more virulent Thatcherite 'authoritarian populist' form at the provincial level, it also created an institutional impediment to attempts at similar measures at the federal level.[195] As MacBride and Shields note: "The implication is that external pressures may accomplish for the neo-conservative approach what domestic politics cannot."[196]

The project might also be usefully conceptualized as a passive revolution on other grounds. Whereas the clear articulation of neo-liberal or neo-conservative values with continentalism was novel, continentalism *per se* was already a dominant characteristic of Canada's permeable Fordist mode of development. Even the series of nationalist interventions briefly undertaken by the Canadian state during the early 1980s were limited to attempts to enhance domestic ownership of industry without "nationalizing the circuit of capital."[197]

In his analysis of the evolving policy position of the C.D. Howe Institute (CDHI), Ernst argues that 1981-82 marked the "last gasp of economic nationalist and statist industrial policies."[198] The always-tentative Canadian embrace of Keynesianism gave way to a rearticulation of continentalism with the core elements of

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[195] McBride and Shields, *Dismantling a Nation: Canada and the New World Order*, 68, 84; Hall defines 'authoritarian populism' as "...an exceptional form of the capitalist state which, unlike classical fascism, has retained most (though not all) of the formal representative institutions in place, and which at the same time has been able to construct around itself an active popular consent." In Hall, "The Great Moving Right Show," 22.

Hall in essence is combining Poulantzas' notion of 'authoritarian statism' with Laclau's conception of the 'popular democratic.' Bleyer, "The New Realism: A Socialist Response to the Crisis in Britain." Hall argues that Thatcherism combined a "creeping authoritarianism masked by rituals of formal representation" which first appeared under social democracy, with a populist discourse which neutralizes the contradiction between the people and the power bloc. In Alan Hunt, *Marxism and Democracy* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980). He suggests further that the success of Thatcherism had fundamentally altered the terrain on which a counterhegemonic project would have to be organized. Bleyer, "The New Realism: A Socialist Response to the Crisis in Britain."

[196] McBride and Shields, *Dismantling a Nation: Canada and the New World Order*, 85.

[197] Carroll, "Restructuring Capital, Reorganizing Consent: Gramsci, Political Economy and Canada."

[198] Ernst, "From Liberal Continentalism to Neoconservatism: North American Free Trade and the Politics of the C.D. Howe Institute," 134.

neo-conservatism.[199] From this point onwards, the CDHI, always a strong proponent of freer trade, would now link this position to neo-conservative objectives, primarily the dramatic reduction of the role of the public sector and the state.[200]

The adoption of free trade as a touchstone was, according to Carroll, part of an attempt to shift from the "exceptionalist crisis management" to a more expansive hegemonic project involving the creation of a new ruling or historical bloc dominated by capital. A bilateral free trade agreement not only delivered a conditioning framework for the Canadian economy and polity, it also constituted an attempt to win 'the people' to the new historical bloc by appealing to consumers with the promise of lower prices and more jobs resulting from lower tariffs and access to the massive U.S. market. This project could thus be termed a passive revolution.[201]

While the pairing of neo-conservatism with continentalism in the form of the FTA served as a strategic end run around continuing popular support for the institutions and benefits of the KWS, this linkage also created a focal point for the development and mobilization of opposition to this agenda. The popular sector's critique of the FTA, and subsequently of the broader neo-conservative agenda, was easily rooted in a nationalist discourse.[202] Furthermore the crystallization of a broader agenda in one specific political project, indeed in one document, provided a clear rallying point for opponents. As Campbell and Pal argue:

> The FTA like previous attempts to forge a free trade deal with the US became a quivering lightening rod for all the electric storms of nationalism and identity that have beset the country's history ... The FTA as text powerfully

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[199] Brodie and Jenson, *Crisis, Challenge and Change.*

[200] Ernst reminds us of the fundamentally anti-democratic nature of this agenda while evoking the memory of Milton Friedman's friendship with General Pinochet. Ernst notes that the CDHI's publication *Policy Review and Outlook 1991* refers to the need for capital to allay the "danger that public opinion may be organized around the need to reverse previous policy directions, regardless of their rationale." Ernst, "From Liberal Continentalism to Neoconservatism: North American Free Trade and the Politics of the C.D. Howe Institute," 135.

[201] Carroll, "Restructuring Capital, Reorganizing Consent: Gramsci, Political Economy and Canada."

[202] These same factors might have inherently limited the counterhegemonic potential of opposition to neo-conservatism by tying it to a defence of the KWS. See Peter Bleyer, "Coalitions of Social Movements as Agencies for Social Change: the Action Canada Network," in *Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice*, ed. William K. Carroll (Toronto: Garamond, 1992) and Leo Panitch, "The Ambiguous Legacy of the Free Trade Election," *Canadian Dimension*, January 1989.

condensed symbols and issue over which Canadians have been divided for generations.[203]

11. Convergence and Counterhegemony: the PCN/ACN and Adequate Agency

The specific form taken by the neo-conservative project established limits as well as opportunities for a popular response. A passive revolution with hegemonic aspirations could not successfully be opposed by a short-term, defensive war of manoeuvre. Rather, opposing social forces would have to achieve a convergence of a more than defensive nature in order to constitute a counterhegemonic project. This would be no small feat since simply holding an alliance of social forces together around the most limited agreement or basic objectives is difficult enough. The complex process involving the formation of a new social and political subject, creating a new democratic formation and general will is a task of a much higher order. Miliband attaches the simple label of "adequate agency" to this vehicle with the potential to bring into being a transformative social project.[204]

The PCN is particularly interesting because a key component of the convergence it represents has been the relationship between labour and other social movements. Advocates of convergence as a route to counterhegemony argue that a central role for the labour movement is an essential precondition.[205] Additionally, Boggs argues further "real convergence is inconceivable without the appearance of a

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[203] Robert M. Campbell and Leslie A. Pal, *The Real Worlds of Canadian Politics: Cases in Process and Policy*, 3rd ed. (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 1994), 232-3.

[204] "'Adequate agencies' in this context means political formations which can effectively give political coherence to a vast constituency of workers, white and black, men and women, young and old, and to a host of other people in other classes as well, and mobilize them in support of a transformative programme that would speak to their needs and aspirations." Ralph Miliband, Leo Panitch, and John Saville, "Problems and Promise of Socialist Renewal," in *The Socialist Register*, ed. Ralph Miliband, Leo Panitch, and John Saville (London: The Merlin Press, 1988), 7.

[205] Boggs, *Social Movements and Political Power*, 242-49; Boris Frankel, *The Post-Industrial Utopians* (London: Polity Press, 1987), 242; Miliband and Panitch, "Socialists and the 'New Conservatism'," 513. Miliband and Panitch, like Frankel, are arguing in effect for a reconstruction of the socialist project. To this end Rustin contends, "the unifying principle of socialism – the objective foundation on which, in Laclau and Mouffe's terms, equivalence can be achieved – may in fact be resistance to capital, not class." Rustin, "Absolute Voluntarism: Critique of a Post-Marxist Concept of Hegemony," 171. Approaching the same question from the opposite direction, Wilde concludes that: "The wider focus of new social movements raises the possibility that activists will begin to ask the 'big' questions about the nature of society and its future development and come to realize that their particular goals are blocked by one major barrier, capitalism." Wilde, "Class Analysis and the Politics of New Social Movements," 66.

new kind of labour movement and perhaps a redefinition of new movement initiatives as well."[206]

To what extent was the Pro-Canada Network a nascent counterhegemonic project? How closely did it approach the status of adequate agency? As a step towards the democratization of the Canadian popular sector the Network appeared to have this potential. As Wainwright points out, the process of democratic debate and decision-making is often, wrongly, undervalued. It is just as important and contingent as the development of a common and alternative discourse.[207] Still, whether in the case of the Pro-Canada Network an increasingly strong unifying principle in fact shifted gears to the development of a 'general will' or counterhegemonic theme is a more difficult question to answer in the affirmative. Certainly, counterhegemony cannot be considered as a teleological outcome – an automatic result of organizational development or the heavy weight of late capitalism. The historical record shows that defensive, reactive political projects are a far more likely outcome and, in the case of the initial basis for unity of the PCN, this was certainly the case. But the Network survived and grew beyond this first phase and was to some degree transformed. The nature and extent of this transformation, as well as the factors leading to the eventual decline of the PCN/ACN, bear further examination.

11.1 Quantifying Convergence: Master framing as "Cognitive Counterhegemony"

Among the methodological challenges to be faced in this assessment of the PCN/ACN is the need for a means by which to judge the counterhegemonic potential of the project. In their study of social movement activists in Vancouver, British Columbia, Carroll and Ratner build on the concept of collective action frames and master frames.[208] First elaborated out of the Resource Mobilization paradigm,

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[206] Boggs, *Social Movements and Political Power*, 20.

[207] Wainwright, *Arguments for a New Left: Answering the Free-Market Right.*

[208] William K. Carroll and Robert S. Ratner, "Master Framing and Cross-Movement Networking in Contemporary Social Movements," *The Sociological Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (1996); William K. Carroll and Robert S. Ratner, "Master Frames and Counterhegemony: Political Sensibilities in Contemporary Social Movements," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 33, no. 4 (1996).

collective action frames are "interpretive schemata through which movements define certain conditions as unjust, attribute responsibility for the injustices and point to alternatives that might be achieved through collective action."[209] For their study, Carroll and Ratner build on framing analysis of specific movements and SMOs to explore master frames, which they define as "general conceptions of injustice and general visions of socio-political alternatives."[210] They suggest that these master frames "can be seen as the cognitive aspect of counterhegemonic politics."[211] Their conclusions provide some useful indicators for a study of the PCN/ACN. Based on in-depth interview data from 212 activists in a variety of social movements, the authors identify "a tendency for the use of a broadly resonant master frame – the political-economy account of injustice – to be associated with the practice of cross-movement activism."[212] Broadly defined, the "political economy frame" views power as systemic, oppression as a matter of material deprivation, and resistance as attempts to transform the system. In contrast, a competing "identity politics frame" attaches power to identity markers, ties oppression to exclusion and opposition to empowerment. Finally, in the "liberal frame" a plurality of groups vying for power mobilize resources (i.e., money), opposition is expressed through judicial, parliamentary or commercial means while injustice is viewed as rooted in the denial of rights.[213]

The study's relevance to the PCN/ACN case of cross-sectoral coalition formation is accentuated by the fact that the data was gathered from activists from movements and organizations that, in many cases, have been involved in the Network.

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[209] Carroll and Ratner, "Master Frames and Counterhegemony: Political Sensibilities in Contemporary Social Movements," 411. See in particular Snow et al., "Frame Alignment Process, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation" and Snow and Benford, "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest."

[210] Carroll and Ratner, "Master Frames and Counterhegemony: Political Sensibilities in Contemporary Social Movements," 411. For Tarrow master frames "help to animate an entire Social Movement Sector." Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*, 131.

[211] Carroll and Ratner, "Master Framing and Cross-Movement Networking in Contemporary Social Movements," 602; Carroll and Ratner, "Master Frames and Counterhegemony: Political Sensibilities in Contemporary Social Movements," 412.

[212] Carroll and Ratner, "Master Framing and Cross-Movement Networking in Contemporary Social Movements," 616.

[213] Ibid.: 609.

In fact, between one-third and one-half of the respondents indicated that they had personally participated in the activities of the national network's provincial affiliate – ACN-BC.[214]

12. Conclusion

In the introduction to their 1988 collection of studies of social movements, Cunningham et al. pose a series of questions concerning the future of coalition politics in Canada:

> What will bind these groups together in a common effort to achieve widespread radical change? How will the hegemonic project emerge from the differences they represent? Are there affinities among the various coalitions that are obscured by the political lenses we normally use to focus our understandings? What new forms of political leadership are emerging from our practice?[215]

From different perspectives, varying assessments of the Pro-Canada Network's prospects were made in the late 1980s. From a class-analytical perspective, Albo and Swartz argued that the passage of the FTA would lead to dissolution of the PCN given its lack of "any coherent general view."[216] From a traditional pluralist viewpoint, Doern also considered the PCN's disappearance as a likely result of the FTA receding as a focal point for political battle and of the reintegration of many of the coalition's components into traditional agencies of Canadian politics.[217] Somewhat more adventurously, Bashevkin wondered whether the PCN could provide a "societal

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[214] Ibid.: 605; Carroll and Ratner, "Master Frames and Counterhegemony: Political Sensibilities in Contemporary Social Movements," 428. In keeping with the dialectical bent of their neo-gramscian perspective, the authors also suggest that "practices of master framing and cross-movement networking probably condition each other. On the one hand, cross movement networking forms an experiential basis for a more comprehensive critique of injustice, and the political economy frame is favoured for that task, compared to other more particularistic or conventional frames. On the other hand, it is probably activists with a political-economic critique who are drawn to cross-movement networking in the first place." Carroll and Ratner, "Master Framing and Cross-Movement Networking in Contemporary Social Movements," 616.

[215] Cunningham et al., eds., *Social Movements/Social Change: The Politics and Practice of Organizing*, 14.

[216] Albo and Swartz, "The Free Trade Papers," 156; for more aggressive statements of class-theoretical positions, see David McNally, "Beyond Nationalism, Beyond Protectionism: Labour and the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement," *Capital and Class*, no. 43 Spring (1991) or François Moreau, "Free Trade, Canadian Style," *Against the Currents*, no. 33, July/August, (1991).

[217] Doern and Tomlin, *Faith and Fear: The Free Trade Story*, 269.

alternative" to the "powerful business coalition that supported free trade."[218] Using a neo-Gramscian framework, Carroll was cautious about coalition formation in general, drawing clear distinctions between defensive and counterhegemonic projects, yet relatively optimistic regarding the project constituted by Pro-Canada Network.[219] Mahon saw in the PCN a prefiguration of the kind of organic alliance, which, if consolidated, could form the basis for an alternative project.[220]

The following account of the emergence and development of the Pro-Canada/Action Canada Network will provide the basis for an evaluation of the predictive capacity of these analytical frameworks. In addition, it will permit an assessment of Drache and Cameron's claims for the popular sector of which the Network was the most structured collective manifestation. Continuing in a long intellectual tradition identified by Petracca, Drache and Cameron generated both a helpful, if largely underdeveloped, analytical tool and a hopeful normative appraisal.[221] Until now, the explanatory strength and potential of the former has been lost in the immediacy of the engagement of the latter. Examining the PCN experience, we will consider the potential for the 'popular sector' as an analytical concept while reviewing Drache and Cameron's normative judgment.

As we move on to an account of the PCN/ACN, some appropriate building blocks for an analytical framework are now in evidence. From RMT we retain, in particular, the focus on organizational factors, including structure and process and, of course, the mobilization of resources. Similarly, the mapping of the political opportunity structure as well as the more general emphasis on continuity and linkages stand out as important contributions. While the focus on identity and discourse so prominent within NMT is clearly relevant to this project, a neo-Gramscian perspective that includes these variables without abstracting agent from structure or promoting particularism seems preferable. Moreover, a neo-Gramscian approach retains the

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[218] Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: the Politics of Canadian Nationalism*, 130.

[219] Carroll, "Restructuring Capital, Reorganizing Consent: Gramsci, Political Economy and Canada."

[220] Mahon, "Post-Fordism: Some Issues for Labour," 25.

[221] Drache and Cameron, eds., *The Other MacDonald Report.*

strengths of political economic analysis while integrating the importance of ideology or consciousness. Finally, the descriptive term popular sector might, in the Canadian context, provide the basis for an analytical concept that synthesizes the strengths of these different frameworks: combining consideration of structure with attention to agency as well as the structure of agency.

Reviewing some of the key sectors, movements and organizations that formed the PCN, we will quickly see the importance of a framework that pays heed to resource maximization and leadership models as well as policy positions and political discourses. In the following chapter we focus our attention on the labour, women's and ecumenical social justice movements and more specifically their approaches to trade policy and coalition politics.

Chapter 3

Three Sectors, Political Agency and Free Trade

1. Introduction

As a climate of social and economic crisis took hold in the 1970s and early 1980s, the elements of an emerging popular sector were slowly taking shape. As groups and sectors shared concerns and cooperated on initiatives, they also rejected the politics of tripartism, in the case of the labour movement, and moved beyond the narrow confines of interest group pluralism, in the case of other sectors.

The release of the *Macdonald Report* in 1985 contributed to a clear demarcation between a neo-conservative corporate vision of Canada – increasingly with unambiguous state support – and a range of opposing views from popular sector groups. With his endorsement of free trade, Macdonald also framed the issue that would ultimately bring the popular sector together in the form of the Pro-Canada Network.

Along with the *Macdonald Report* and the response it elicited, other events over the course of the 1980s marked the progression of the popular sector. *Ethical Reflections,* the bishop's statement on the economy in 1983, was a lightning rod for state and corporate derision and a rallying cry for the formation of a broad coalition of social forces. Later, events such as the Dialogue '86 meeting, sponsored by the Canadian Labour Congress, and the Working Committee for Social Solidarity, convened by progressive church and labour activists, were stepping stones for evolving relationships, both organizational and personal, that would form the basis for the Pro-Canada Network.

In this chapter the focus of attention is on three sectors that were instrumental in this process: labour, women, and church social justice. Reviewing their approaches to political engagement and specifically coalition building, and secondly, to the policy issue of Canada-U.S. free trade, will help us to understand the dynamics that would eventually lead to the formation of the PCN in 1987. In keeping with the elements of a theoretical model sketched out in the previous chapter, attention to organizational factors will be balanced with sensitivity to policy and discourse. As we explore the

roots of the engagement with the FTA and coalition building sector by sector, we will highlight the importance of a key variable in this process: an ideological commitment to broad social change.

This chapter tells the story of Canadians from different backgrounds and perspectives coming to a similar stance on bilateral free trade and, for differing reasons and with varying modus operandi, adopting coalition building as a political strategy, culminating with the formation of the Pro-Canada Network in 1987.

2. Ecumenical Social Justice

2.1 Early Developments and a Model Established: 1965-1981

Coalitions have long been a strategy of choice for social justice advocates within Canada's mainstream Christian churches. In turn, church-based social justice work has deep roots in Canadian political culture, not least in the development of the CCF.[1] In the 1920s and 1930s evangelical activists, particularly in Western Canada, actively developed ties with urban labour and rural farm activists. The 'social gospellers' were key players in the formation of the CCF in 1933 and provided the new political movement with many of its early leaders.[2]

From the 1940s to the mid-1960s institutional cooperation between churches and the labour movement at the national level largely took place within the Religion-Labour Foundation and, beginning in 1959, the Religion-Labour Council. These were ecumenical, voluntary organizations "dedicated to the promotion and extension of social and economic justice in the industrial life of the nation."[3]

In the second half of the 1960s, a series of initiatives established the groundwork for future developments. In 1965, the national social action offices of the Catholic and Protestant Churches formed the National Committee on the Church in Industrial Society (NCCIS). According to a 1966 review of the Catholic Conference

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[1] See Chapter 1 above.

[2] Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28.*

[3] "Structures for Ecumenical Social Action," Inter-Church Consultative Committee on Development and Relief, Toronto, 1984, 2.

Social Affairs office, participation in this committee was "the single most important item among our ongoing activities...it provides for personal acquaintance among executives of all the major churches in the social field."[4] The NCCIS played a key role in organizing the Working Conference on the Implications of a Health Charter for Canadians held in Ottawa in 1965. The Conference was co-sponsored by the mainstream churches and various other national organizations including the Canadian Labour Congress.[5]

The Christian Conscience and Poverty Conference was the next major step in the evolving relationship. Held in Montréal in May 1968, the conference was sponsored by twelve churches, the federal and provincial governments, and labour and private sector groups and attracted more than 500 delegates.[6] Conference participants agreed on the need for a "practical strategy of united action."[7] These conferences "whetted the church leaders' appetite for more inclusive coalitions than had been provided by the Religion-Labour Council" and marked the beginning of a mushrooming of ecumenical and broader projects, committees and working groups that would continue through the 1970s.[8]

A strategy committee formed to follow-up on the Poverty Conference issued 50,000 copies of its report *Towards a Coalition for Development* in May 1969. Jointly published by the Canadian Catholic Conference (the predecessor of the Canadian

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[4] Nicholson, "Bishops in Politics," 64.

[5] John Lucal, "Coalitions for Social Ecumenism: the Canadian Story," SODEPAX Committee Meeting XVII, Geneva, 18-19 November 1980; see also Bishop Remi De Roo, *Cries of Victims - Voice of God* (Ottawa: Novalis, 1986).

[6] De Roo, *Cries of Victims - Voice of God*; see also "Structures for Ecumenical Social Action," Inter-Church Consultative Committee on Development and Relief, Toronto, 1984, 5.

[7] Lucal, "Coalitions for Social Ecumenism: the Canadian Story"; see also De Roo, *Cries of Victims - Voice of God.*

[8] There was an overall increase in mutual trust between the various Protestant and the Roman Catholic Churches during this period. In Canada, Catholic social justice work was inspired by the Vatican II call for wider vision and involvement. A key moment in this transformation of the Catholic Church in Canada was the establishment of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP) in 1967. See "Structures for Ecumenical Social Action," 2; and W.E. Hewitt, "Roman Catholicism and Social Justice in Canada: a Comparative Case Study," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 28, no. 3 (1991): 306. On the important role of the (Protestant) Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) as an incubator of ecumenism and social action, see De Roo, *Cries of Victims - Voice of God.*

Conference of Catholic Bishops) and the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), the pamphlet made its debt to liberation theology very clear. It also reaffirmed the 1968 Conference's call for the church to "actively support the powerless in our society as they seek their share in decision-making and in determining their own destiny."[9] Viewed by Nicholson as "an informal but broadly-based coalition," the strategy committee proposed a four-part strategy for ecumenical development work.[10] The central proposition was for the formation of a national coalition of churches and NGOs engaged in development work. But the Canadian Coalition for Development, formed at a forum in March 1970, was short-lived. Subsequent critics have argued that the coalition was too ambitious and simply became far too broad, far too fast.[11] While the inclusion of business groups like the Canadian Chamber of Commerce reflected the budding tripartite mood of the moment, according to Tony Clarke, who joined the CCCB's Social Affairs Commission staff in 1971, it led to the result that "not all the partners were compatible." Clarke adds that there was no consideration of the strategic implications of involving these groups.[12] Meanwhile, to the extent that there was increasing mutual trust between church, labour and other likeminded groups during this period, it was not accompanied by the development of structures suitable for the longer-term maintenance of these relationships. The apparent predisposition to organizing brief large-scale events was one likely obstacle.

A veritable proliferation of interchurch committees took place during the next decade; a directory published by the CCC in 1980 listed thirty-eight.[13] Hoping to

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[9] Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and Canadian Council of Churches, "Strategy Committee Report: Towards a Coalition for Development," Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and Canadian Council of Churches, May 1969.

[10] Nicholson, "Bishops in Politics," 43.

[11] This is suggested in Lucal, "Coalitions for Social Ecumenism: the Canadian Story" and confirmed in Clarke, Interview by author.

[12] Clarke, Interview by author.

[13] "Structures for Ecumenical Social Action," 38. Bishop Remi De Roo, among others, argues that inter-church coalitions are a "particularly Canadian form of ecumenism." According to De Roo, "the uniqueness of the Canadian experience lies in the fact that a coalition model has been followed rather than a structural association model. The latter would structure ecumenical organizations as departments of national churches, while the former encourages action-oriented coalitions with minimal structures formed by the churches in order to achieve specific tasks. The coalitions require ecumenical good will, adequate resources and personnel supplied by the various churches, as well as basic agreement on the

build on the experience of the failure of the Coalition for Development, these interchurch committees were each given specific, targeted and, theoretically manageable, mandates. In practice, as the case of GATT-Fly demonstrates, these initial plans tended to underestimate the breadth of issues and the demand for the sort of work these coalitions could accomplish. Nevertheless, these committees were for the most part much more successful than was their, even more overly ambitious, predecessor.

2.2 Trade and Development: GATT-Fly

Until the late 1960s, ecumenical social justice work in Canada was largely oriented around the issue of poverty. In the case of the Catholic Church this focus was strongly influenced by developments in the Third World. The 'theology of liberation' developing in Latin America particularly swayed the church. Specifically, the concept of a 'preferential option for the poor' first enunciated at the Second General Conference of Latin American bishops at Medillin, Columbia in 1968 became a touchstone.[14]

The choice of health care (1965 Conference) and housing (Canadian Conference on Housing in October 1968) as priorities for ecumenical action reflected an ecumenical emphasis on domestic poverty. The CCCB Social Affairs Commission's year-end report in 1967 considered that 60 percent of staff time and resources had been committed to the issue of domestic poverty.[15]

At the end of the decade, developments in Nigeria-Biafra and elsewhere in the Third World raised the profile of global poverty, which became more prominent on the ecumenical agenda. The availability of state funding for development and relief work via the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) no doubt aided

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thrust of social issues." De Roo, *Cries of Victims - Voice of God*, 97.

[14] Christopher Lind, "Ethics, Economics and Canada's Catholic Bishops," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 7, no. 3 (1983): 153.

[15] On the emphasis on domestic poverty, see Lucal, "Coalitions for Social Ecumenism: the Canadian Story"; the CCCB report is quoted in Nicholson, "Bishops in Politics," 43.

and abetted this shift.[16] These resources were not, for the most part, available for work on similar domestic issues.

The formation of one of the first interchurch social justice coalitions – GATT-Fly – reflected this changing agenda. Canadian church representatives attending the 1972 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD III) in Santiago, Chile were less than impressed with the official Canadian delegation's performance, noting that "on twenty-six major votes, Canada had voted with the rich countries and against the poor ones."[17] At a follow-up seminar in June 1972, the returning observers concluded that a coalition was needed to do further work on trade and related issues.[18] GATT-Fly was given limited resources, one staff person, and a mandate "including animation and constituency building as well as research."[19] Within a year of GATT-Fly's founding, it became apparent that the trade issue was "larger than initially thought." Now, concern also emerged that the new coalition's work might undermine the churches' important funding relationship with CIDA.[20]

GATT-Fly's focus and perspective evolved over the course of the next few years culminating in a stance in favour of economic 'self-reliance.' By counter posing self-reliance to dependence, GATT-Fly linked domestic and international issues and struggles. By working with peoples' organizations within and outside the ecumenical movement, both at home and abroad, rather than international development agencies, GATT-Fly helped to prepare the groundwork for the trade issue to become a critical component in the coalescing of the Canadian popular sector a decade later.

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[16] Minutes, Inter-church Consultative Committee on Development and Relief, Toronto, 28 October 1971 indicates that participants were aware that CIDA funds available for distribution through NGOs had increased from $5 million to $13 million.

[17] CCCB official Bernard Daly quoted in Nicholson, "Bishops in Politics," 64.

[18] Ibid., as well as Lucal, "Coalitions for Social Ecumenism: the Canadian Story" and Dennis Howlett, "The Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice," in *Coalitions for Justice: the Story of Canada's Interchurch Coalitions*, ed. Christopher Lind and Joe Mihevc (Ottawa: Novalis, 1994).

[19] Roger Hutchison, "Ecumenical Witness in Canada: Social Action Coalitions," *International Review of Mission* 71 (1982).

[20] Minutes, Inter-church Consultative Committee on Development and Relief, Toronto, 17 February 1973.

One of earliest attempts to state briefly and pragmatically the case for self-reliance was *Canada's Food Trade – By Bread Alone?*[21] It includes the following definition of the three basic principles of self-reliance, which are regularly repeated in subsequent GATT-Fly publications.

> 1) Canadians produce the essential goods and services they need in the quantity and quality needed.
>
> 2) Families and individuals who now receive an average or below average incomes and who make up the vast majority of Canadians, have enough income to purchase the goods and services which they collectively produce.
>
> 3) Canada's foreign trade continues, but only as a planned extension of production and trade at home.[22]

Based on this perspective, GATT-Fly's response was immediate when Donald Macdonald advocated a "leap of faith" into bilateral free trade with the United States. In an article entitled "Free Trade or Self-Reliance?" GATT-Fly made its position clear:

> Today's advocates of free trade seem to want to forget history. They assume that everyone shares their faith in the universal benefits of free trade. They are inclined to ignore some very serious questions that have been raised about the supposed virtues of unfettered commerce.[23]

GATT-Fly also reflected the general ecumenical commitment to coalition building and was very supportive of initiatives to bring groups together around the issue of free trade. In fact, GATT-Fly staff attended the first meetings of the nascent Toronto-based Coalition against Free Trade in November 1985.[24] GATT-Fly also convened two important meetings early in 1986: a two-day consultation on free trade in Toronto (24-25 January) and the Ecumenical Conference on Free Trade, Self-reliance and Economic Justice at Orleans, Ontario (26 February – 1 March). The list

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[21] GATT-Fly, "Canada's Food Trade - By Bread Alone?" GATT-Fly, Toronto, August 1978. In fact GATT-Fly's first staff person made the case for self-reliance even earlier. In John Dillon, "Limitations of the Trade Issue," GATT-Fly, Toronto, 1973. Another GATT-Fly employee suggests theorists such as Samir Amin and Andre Gunder Frank were a strong influence on the group. Howlett, "The Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice."

[22] For a restatement of GATT-Fly's self-reliance perspective, see GATT-Fly, "GATT-Fly Report," June 1985.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Minutes, Coalition against Free Trade, Toronto, 8 November 1985; Dennis Howlett, Interview by author, Toronto, 3 March 1992.

of participants at both these events reads very much like a 'Who's Who' of organizations and individuals who would later come together under the banner of the Pro-Canada Network.[25]

The conclusion of the report of the Orleans conference makes explicit the second facet of GATT-Fly's agenda on free trade. To wit:

> We challenge the CHURCHES to declare themselves more clearly and more strongly on the official level against free trade and to make more concentrated efforts to involve their grass-roots members in a movement against free trade.[26]

While GATT-Fly was committed to cross-sectoral coalition building across sectors on free trade, it was apparent that pushing its own member institutions to take a stronger stand on the issue was an equally important and difficult task. This dynamic was symptomatic of GATT-Fly's role as an amalgam of a voice for grassroots church activists and a vanguard for change *vis-à-vis* the leadership of the mainline Christian churches. Similarly, as an institution that had carved out its own space in the ecumenical realm, GATT-Fly was also a convenient home for church activists and staff who had difficulty getting official sanction for participation in cross-sectoral coalition work from their own churches.[27]

As the free trade debate moved towards its high point, GATT-Fly published *Community Self-Reliance: A Canadian Vision of Economic Justice*. Its objective was to clarify the meaning of self-reliance for Canada and contribute to the national debate concerning alternatives to continental integration.[28] Along with the results of the

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[25] "Churches Enter Free Trade Debate," *Catholic New Times*, 9 February 1986, 1; "Churches Urged to Oppose Free Trade with the U.S.," *GATT-Fly Report*, March 1986; GATT-Fly, "Free Trade or Self-reliance: Report of the Ecumenical Conference on Free Trade, Self-Reliance and Economic Justice," GATT-Fly, Orleans, 26 February - 1 March 1987.

[26] GATT-Fly, "Free Trade or Self-reliance: Report of the Ecumenical Conference on Free Trade, Self-Reliance and Economic Justice."

[27] Confirmed in Clarke, Interview by author and Howlett, Interview by author. This issue was identified by the General Secretaries of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops in response to Tony Clarke's designation as chairperson of the Pro-Canada Network in 1987. As they wrote at the time "even though you were named by GATT-Fly to this position you are a CCCB representative to GATT-Fly and as such must represent and defend CCCB policy publicly." CCCB General Secretaries, Memorandum to Tony Clarke, 18 November 1987.

[28] GATT-Fly, "Community Self-Reliance: A Canadian Vision of Economic Justice," GATT-Fly, Toronto, 1987.

Toronto and Orleans conferences on free trade and self-reliance, this document reflects GATT-Fly's important contribution to the evolving analysis and critique of free trade. Similarly, GATT-Fly and the social justice units of its member churches brought both their experience and commitment to coalition building to the broader popular sector.

3. The Labour Movement

3.1 'Ready-to-wear' Coalitions and Beyond: 1974-1986

The Canadian labour movement's experience with coalition or alliance building can be traced back to the formation of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in the 1930s, when organized labour stayed aloof from the founding of a party that defined itself as "Farmer, Labour, Socialist." In 1961, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), itself formed out of a merger of two labour federations, the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) and the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) played a central role in the CCF's transformation into the New Democratic Party (NDP).[29]

Beyond its core alliance with the NDP, the CLC engaged in very few formal coalitions during its first decade of existence. Where they were formed, coalitions tended to be short-lived, broad in membership, but limited in scope.[30] During this period, most of the CLC's political eggs remained in the lobbying basket with an emphasis on a "consultative relationship with government" to deliver results. The CLC's relationship with the NDP was limited to formal endorsement accompanied by financial and in-kind contributions.[31]

The CLC began its flirtation with tripartite planning structures in the early 1970s. In contrast with existing consultative relationships, tripartism along the

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[29] See Chapter 1 above. On the history of the CLC and the Canadian labour movement, see Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: the Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980.*

[30] See, for example, the Medicare and poverty initiatives involving church groups and others noted above.

[31] On the evolution of CLC political strategy in this period, see Chapter 2 in Miriam Smith, "Labour Without Allies: The Canadian Labour Congress in Politics, 1956-1988" (Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, Yale University, 1990).

European model would institutionalize labour participation in some state decision-making. While tripartism suffered serious blows in the 1970s, including strong opposition at a series of CLC conventions and a less than enthusiastic response from labour's putative partners, it remained a strategic option in the mind of some of the labour leadership well into the 1980s.[32]

Even as the CLC leadership was meeting with government and business to consider options for tripartism in the summer of 1976 it carried a mandate from the May 1976 convention to call a general work stoppage to oppose wage controls.[33] On 14 October 1976, more than one million trade unionists participated in the National Day of Protest. From the CLC's perspective, this event marked its 'coming of age' as the senior partner for a broader coalition of social forces. Ten years later, its house organ *Canadian Labour* took a self-congratulatory look back:

> The CLC emerged from these battles as a credible and strong defender of people's social and economic concerns. On the day of protest in 1976 it proved that it not only speaks for its two million direct members but also for other sectors of Canadian society whose members do not have the power or organization to speak for themselves.
>
> Since the day of protest, the CLC has repeatedly shown Canadians that it is their best – if not the only – national organization willing and able to come to the rescue of all those hurt by the system, and by insensitive governments.[34]

A senior official with a leading Congress affiliate gave a quite different assessment of the CLC's record in a memorandum to his president:

> Coalition building! I kept blinking as I read the sections about the great coalition work that's been done by the CLC. In most cases, the CLC has been a *barrier*, not a catalyst; things have happened in spite of, rather than because of the CLC (due to the CLC's paranoid protection of its 'territory').[35]

Whatever its success, the 1976 Day of Protest was more typical of CLC initiatives for its failure in terms of coalition building. In this sense, it was an

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[32] On the former, see Panitch, "Corporatism in Canada" and Chapter 3 in Smith, "Labour Without Allies: The Canadian Labour Congress in Politics, 1956-1988" ; on the latter, see Chapter 3 in Smith, "Labour Without Allies: The Canadian Labour Congress in Politics, 1956-1988" and Chapter 1 above.

[33] Panitch, "Corporatism in Canada," 76; Charles Bauer, "Looking Back: the National Day of Protest," *Canadian Labour* 1986, 12.

[34] Bauer, "Looking Back: the National Day of Protest," 14.

[35] Sam Gindin, Memorandum to Bob White, 22 April 1988.

appropriate precursor to a series of superficial coalition initiatives that were broad in scope of membership, narrow in mandate and ultimately unsuccessful. Most were coalitions in name only, as one observer put it: "They were CLC-dominated with little or no coalition process: basically declare it a coalition and voilà."[36]

Under pressure from affiliates concerned about its tripartite ambitions and looking for a more activist orientation, the CLC's 1978 convention adopted a proposal for "a 'people's coalition for jobs' that would embrace the unemployed, trade unions, students, pensioners, churches, political parties and those concerned with the need to turn the economy around."[37] In 1979, the CLC joined with other groups to form the Canadian Health Coalition (CHC).[38] Two years later the CLC organized a major rally against high interest rates bringing more than 100,000 Canadians onto Parliament Hill on 21 November 1981. In theory, the mobilization was the work of the Coalition on Interest Rates. In practice, the coalition was a top-down CLC construct. In the words of the Congress publication Canadian Labour: "the CLC is *the* founding member" [emphasis mine].[39] Indeed, at its first meeting on 14 October 1981 the coalition "confirmed the CLC's call for a mass rally in Ottawa."[40]

In 1979, following the election of the UAW's Canadian Director Dennis McDermott as its president the previous year, the Congress launched its first "parallel campaign." Reacting to the failure of the tripartite gambit and the imposition of wage controls by the federal government, the CLC organized a direct labour campaign in support of the NDP. The parallel campaign added labour efforts to directly mobilize trade unionists' votes for the party to the other features of the CLC-NDP alliance (i.e.,

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[36] Personal interview with a labour activist.

[37] CLC, "Political Action: People's Coalition for Jobs," Resolution, 1978.

[38] "Health Coalition Wants Medicare Report Implemented," *Canadian Labour*, October 1980. At least in terms of longevity, the CHC proved an exception to the rule celebrating its thirtieth anniversary in 1999.

[39] Charles Bauer, "November 21, 1981: a Milestone in History," *Canadian Labour*, November-December 1981; this analysis was confirmed in Bickerton, Interview by author.

[40] Bauer, "November 21, 1981: a Milestone in History"; see also Smith, "Labour Without Allies: The Canadian Labour Congress in Politics, 1956-1988," 212 and Charlotte A. B. Yates, *From Plant to Politics: The Autoworkers Union in Postwar Canada* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 213.

funding and in-kind resources to the party and formal affiliation). It was considered a strategic breakthrough for the NDP and was repeated in subsequent election campaigns.[41]

With enthusiasm for tripartism on a definite downturn, the increased commitment to the NDP represented by the parallel campaign set the stage for a new central strategic conflict within the labour movement that would persist for two decades. On the one hand, the electoral success of 'labour's party' – *the* means to achieve broader social and economic objectives – became labour's overarching political priority. As a resolution adopted at the 1980 CLC convention put it: "Our aim is to elect more NDP governments. In doing so, our movement can achieve greater social and economic justice, dignity, equality and a brighter future for all Canadians."[42] On the other hand, support for alliances with other social groups was also increasing. As a result, the Congress' already stilted and *dirigiste* approach to coalition building was reinforced. As one convention resolution baldly put it:

> CLC affiliates and their locals should work with the NDP to build links with community groups, such as the women's movement or the peace movement, to increase our strength and our support.[43]

It was a logical extension of the CLC's new relationship with the NDP: in addition to being designed, determined and controlled by the Congress for its own ends, coalitions were also counted on to buttress the party's electoral prospects. This would culminate in a round of recriminations following the 1988 federal election and again in 1993.[44]

During this period the CLC did participate in or support a number of smaller single-issue advocacy coalitions. For example, the Congress and its affiliates provided more than $100,000 in support to the Peace Petition Caravan Campaign.[45] In their

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[41] Pat Kerwin, Interview by author, Ottawa, 29 October 1992; see Chapter 4 in Smith, "Labour Without Allies: The Canadian Labour Congress in Politics, 1956-1988," 172-82.

[42] Resolution passed at CLC Convention, 1980.

[43] CLC, "Affiliation to NDP, work with Community Groups," Resolution PE-9, 1984.

[44] See Chapters 4 and 5 below.

[45] Langille, "Building an Effective Peace Movement: One Perspective."

study of NAC, Vickers et al. note NAC's "involvement in numerous policy coalitions with the CLC."[46] Indeed, largely because of the growing number of feminists active in trade unions, there were a series of cooperative initiatives between the women's movement and the labour movement. These women developed campaigns that brought together different unions and in some cases ended up formally affiliated to the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC). Adamson traces the development of the important feminist strand within the labour movement from the first CLC Women's Conference in 1976 through a series of high profile strike actions involving women (e.g. Fleck in 1978, Radio Shack in 1979, Fotomat in 1980, and Irwin Toy in 1982). It also included major campaigns such as the Québec Common Front's successful campaign for paid maternity leave (1980) and Ontario Federation of Labour campaigns on day-care (1980) and mandatory affirmative action (1981).[47]

3.3 Labour and Trade

3.3.1 The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

> Until the FTA we were free traders, as a matter of fact we still are. I mean we even called for a unilateral reduction in tariffs.[48]
>
> The CLC supported freer trade, with the consequence of *de facto* continental integration.[49]

As befits a labour federation dominated by 'international' unions many of whose members were employed in the primary resource extraction sector by branch plants of American corporations, the CLC consistently favoured liberalized trade during most of the postwar period.[50] This remained the case during the upsurge in left nationalism in the 1960s and early 1970s. In response to criticism of a CLC statement supporting freer trade on the convention floor in 1970, Secretary Treasurer William Dodge argued, "we have to think in terms of the interests of the economy as a whole

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[46] Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women*, 143.

[47] Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 80.

[48] Art Kube, Interview by author, Ottawa, 29 October 1992.

[49] Smith, "Labour Without Allies: The Canadian Labour Congress in Politics, 1956-1988," 51.

[50] See Chapter 2 in ibid., 46.

and the effects of restrictive trade approaches to employment in the economy as a whole."[51] Earlier that year, Dodge indicated that the Congress was alarmed by the trend to U.S. protectionism and "favours trade liberalization on a worldwide basis."[52] That same year the left-nationalist Waffle took centre stage at the NDP's policy conference. The Waffle Manifesto reaffirmed the Regina Manifesto's commitment to public ownership of the means of production as a means to counter Americanization. The CLC showed scarce sympathy for the Waffle perspective with 70 percent of its affiliated membership still in international unions and labour's position in the labour market still relatively strong. There was little enthusiasm for "committing economic suicide" by "kicking employers out of the country."[53]

In its submission to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs during its hearings on Bill C-132 (legislation to implement the Foreign Investment Review Act) in June 1973, the CLC publicly declared its visceral opposition to left-nationalism:

> We are not impressed with the narrow economic nationalism espoused in some circles by people who have no regard for the livelihoods and the aspirations of average workers and their families. The latter cannot live on ... the assumed patriotism which comes so easily to ... unthinking and unfeeling political demagogues. Those who would have all foreign investment cut off, irrespective of what the impact may be on men and women in the labour force, in order to realize their own ambitions, do not express our views.[54]

Two years later, when the Economic Council of Canada released a report advocating free trade in July 1975, CLC president Joe Morris and CUPE president Stanley Little were among the co-signatories.[55] In this light, it is not surprising that the CLC and its

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[51] Quoted in ibid.

[52] Quoted in Laxer, *Canada's Unions*, 73.

[53] Quoted in Smith, "Labour Without Allies: The Canadian Labour Congress in Politics, 1956-1988," 49; see also Panitch and Swartz, *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms: From Wage Controls to Social Contract.*

[54] CLC Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade, and Economic Affairs on Bill C-132 (FIRA), June 1973, quoted in Smith, "Labour Without Allies: The Canadian Labour Congress in Politics, 1956-1988," 45.

[55] Laxer, *Canada's Unions*, 113.

affiliates were, at that very time, playing a central role in the campaign to root the Waffle out of the NDP.[56]

By the end of the decade, developments at different levels within the labour movement hinted at the important shift in perspective on trade issues that was to come. In 1979, the Twenty-third Annual Convention of the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) adopted a *Statement on Economic Nationalism and Foreign Ownership*. It declared:

> The GATT talks did nothing for Canada. Free trade with the United States is perilously near, the North American Common Market is on the agenda, and continentalism is approaching reality. The fear now is that economic integration will be followed by political integration.[57]

Whereas the leadership and staff of the CLC were not receptive to such arguments at this time, or even well into the next decade, a group of trade union researchers around the OFL began working on alternative economic and trade policy.[58] This group was enthusiastic about critiques of export-led development and the issue of self-reliance showed up in OFL policy documents beginning in 1982.[59] By 1986, the core document for the OFL convention – *An Economic Programme to make Ontario Work* – would devote a complete section to arguments for self-reliance.[60] The CLC's position put forward as part of a policy review process one year later serves up a stark contrast:

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[56] See Chapter 1 above; on the role of the UAW, see ibid.; see also Sam Gindin, "Breaking Away: The Formation of the Canadian Auto Workers," *Studies in Political Economy*, no. 29, Summer (1989); on the Waffle and labour, see John Hackett, "History of the Ontario Waffle," *Canadian Dimension*, October-November 1980; John Bullen, "The Ontario Waffle and the Struggle for an Independent Socialist Canada: Conflict within the NDP," *Canadian Historical Review* LXIV, no. 2 (1983) and Laxer, *Canada's Unions*.

[57] Ontario Federation of Labour, "Statement on Economic Nationalism and Foreign Ownership," 23rd Annual Convention, Toronto, 27-30 November 1979.

[58] CLC research director Ron Laing was well ensconced on the right wing of the labour movement. During his tenure, Laing never convened the CLC researchers committee; a group he knew was likely to dispute his perspective in certain areas. After replacing Laing as research director, Murray Randall resumed the practice of hosting bi-annual meetings. Bickerton, Interview by author and Jim Turk, Interview by author, Toronto, 20 February 1992.

[59] Some OFL researchers were discussing self-reliance as an economic strategy with GATT-Fly at this point. Turk, Interview by author.

[60] Ontario Federation of Labour, "Document 1: An Economic Programme to Make Ontario Work," Thirtieth Annual Convention, 24-27 November 1986.

> The CLC has long been a proponent of GATT and freer trade through multilateral negotiations. Canada has survived and prospered because it is a trading nation. We need our export markets. These markets have traditionally meant jobs for Canadians and higher standard of living. It is our position that we should continue in our efforts to increase our exports to the EEC; Third World countries and the Pacific Rim; particularly Japan and China. *We know that it is extremely difficult to break into these latter markets because of language and non-tariff barriers. We are not satisfied that enough effort has gone into opening up these markets* either through GATT or through trade delegations to these countries [emphasis mine].[61]

3.3.2 Fair Trade

While the CLC's general orientation on trade remained heavily biased towards liberalization into the late 1970s, its language was increasingly modified to endorse 'fair trade.' In 1978, the CLC's human face on liberalization was explained as follows:

> In reiterating our support for liberalized trade, we must emphasize, however, that we mean fair trade in the true sense of the word. We mean trade where advantages are gained on the basis of superior technology and not on the basis of exploitative wages and inhuman working conditions.[62]

Fair trade was understood as being far more likely in the context of multilateral liberalization, a policy position developed largely as a counterpart to the Trudeau Liberal government's ill-fated Third Option foreign policy initiative. Rather than opposing liberalization *per se*, the CLC argued that trade and exports were simply too focused on the United States. The solution consequently was to expand our trading relationships with Europe and Asia, since "the problem isn't free trade it is just free trade with the U.S."[63] But with the changing dynamics in the labour market, due in part to massive job loss in the industrial sector during the 1981-82 recession, and the shifting balance within the labour movement towards Canadian and public sector unions, a far more substantive change in the CLC's position on foreign investment and trade was about to take place.[64]

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[61] Canadian Labour Congress, "Policy Review," Ottawa, 1987.

[62] Canadian Labour Congress, "Policy on GATT," Twelfth Constitutional Convention, 1978.

[63] Turk, Interview by author.

[64] See Chapter 1 above, as well as Rianne Mahon, "Canadian Labour in the Battle of the Eighties," *Studies in Political Economy* 11 (1983): 166; Smith, "Labour Without Allies: The Canadian Labour Congress in Politics, 1956-1988," 292; and Panitch and Swartz, *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms: From Wage Controls to Social Contract*.

In June 1985, the CLC Executive Council issued a statement backing sector-by-sector trade diversification. The Congress brief to the Special Joint Parliamentary Committee on Canada's International Relations (July 1985) argued for fair trade rather than free trade. For the CLC fair trade was now defined as much more than a focus on multilateral liberalization. It would include: "the logical application of national economic management to create jobs; to ensure a fair distribution of income; to guarantee access to essential services; and to ensure regionally balanced growth."[65] Elsewhere, fair trade was defined as "an arrangement that protects our jobs, our social programs, our culture and our sovereignty."[66]

One year later, the CLC launched its Campaign against Free Trade, Deregulation and Privatization.[67] While the campaign was justified by reference to the "substantial threats to Canadian workers" and the "common philosophy" underlying the three policies, it was also tactically designed to gain the support and mobilize the membership of the CLC's increasingly heterogeneous affiliates.[68] In September 1986, the campaign was relaunched with the theme "Our Canada or Theirs." With an announced commitment of $1.5 million the Congress aimed to educate its membership and reach the public and politicians via "media advertising, lobbying, demonstrations, coalition-building with like-minded groups, public forums, phone banks, news conferences and other means."[69]

3.3.3 Getting Serious about Trade

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[65] *Canadian Labour*, September 1985, 9.

[66] "Our Canada or Theirs: CLC Unveils $1.5 million Campaign," *Canadian Labour*, October 1986.

[67] "The CLC has Created a Potent Force for Turning Public Opinion Against Free Trade," *Globe and Mail*, 5 May 1986, B10; *Canadian Labour*, July-August 1986, 3; Document 19 prepared for the 1986 CLC Convention sketched the outline of the three-pronged campaign.

[68] *Canadian Labour*, April 1986, 7; Larry Wagg, Interview by author, Ottawa, 12 March 1992; Larry Katz, Interview by author, Ottawa, 16 March 1992; Kube, Interview by author.

[69] "Our Canada or Theirs: CLC Unveils $1.5 million Campaign," 3. One of the CLC's senior officials responsible for the campaign recalls that a large share of the budget was already expended on an earlier transport deregulation campaign that was folded into the broader project. Nancy Riche, Interview by author, Ottawa, 5 May 1992; also noted by Wagg, Interview by author.

> We got much more credit in that [free trade] campaign than we deserved. We came to it late. In fact, it was the work of a whole lot of other groups. CAW and the Council of Canadians probably played the biggest roles.[70]

On free trade, as for that matter on its commitment to coalition building, the CLC was often playing catch up with some of its affiliates and provincial federations. The Ontario Federation of Labour, for example, had by this time already made opposition to free trade a top campaign priority.[71] The OFL's effort included twenty public forums across the province from February to April 1986, and a subsequent report *Its Not Free: The Consequences of Free Trade with the US.*[72] Similarly, in October 1986, Québec's three major labour centrals, including the CLC's own affiliate the Fédération des travailleuses et travailleurs du Québec, formed a provincial coalition with the provincial farmers' organization, the Union des producteurs agricoles. The groups also initiated a campaign that, among other things, developed a detailed analysis of the projected sectoral impact of a bilateral free trade agreement.[73]

An overview of the CLC's move to oppose free trade shows that the national labour body was a relatively reluctant convert to this position. The CLC's commitment to a major campaign to oppose the FTA in 1987-88 would have been unlikely without the continuing enthusiasm and pressure of key provincial federations and affiliated unions. A review of the positions and politics of two CLC-affiliated unions – the CAW and CUPW – will help to illustrate the internal dynamics driving the CLC to oppose free trade and into coalition politics.

3.3.4 The Canadian Auto Workers

The CAW was a widely acknowledged leader of labour opposition to the FTA . The union was sensitive to the implications of a comprehensive bilateral trade deal for the Canada-U.S. Auto Pact and the job and investment safeguards it contained in

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[70] Riche, Interview by author.

[71] Ontario Federation of Labour, "Document 2: Free Trade and the Market Mentality," Twenty-ninth Annual Convention, 11-14 November 1985.

[72] "OFL Book on 'Free Trade'," *Canadian Labour*, November 1986; Brodie and Jenson, *Crisis, Challenge and Change*, 306.

[73] "Québec Coalition against Free Trade," *Canadian Labour*, November 1986; Duncan Cameron, Interview by author, Ottawa, 29 October 1991; Patrice Vézina, "La Campagne d'opposition au libre-échange: bilan et perspectives," Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec, Montreal, January 1989.

particular.[74] Consequently, after the Macdonald Commission's endorsement and Prime Minister Mulroney's subsequent announcement that such a deal would be sought, free trade became the focus of an ambitious public speaking schedule by President Bob White in 1985 and 1986.[75]

The strength and immediacy of the Autoworkers reaction to free trade was not born solely of sectoral self-interest, it also stemmed from a political perspective which had been forged in internal battle with the American UAW over the question of concessions in collective bargaining and buttressed by an aggressive membership political education program.[76] The refusal to negotiate concessions, along with other factors, led the Canadian section to break away from the UAW and form an independent union, the CAW, in 1985. The UAW/CAW had also participated in the development of alternatives on trade and economic policy around the OFL. Not surprisingly given its stake in the Canada-U.S. Auto Pact, the union was committed to the concept of managed or planned trade. CAW sympathy for "greater self-sufficiency" was somewhat less predictable though certainly related to the union's position on concessions.[77] The CAW rejected concessions based on its objection to "the notion that the key to workers security lies primarily in playing the game of 'international competitiveness'."[78]

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[74] Yates, *From Plant to Politics: The Autoworkers Union in Postwar Canada*, 248.

[75] *UAW Canada Newsletter*, 27 September 1985. See also Robert White, "The Case Against Bilateral Free Trade with the United States," 14 July 1986; Robert White, "Notes for an Address to the St. Thomas Chamber of Commerce," St. Thomas, Ontario, 9 April 1986; Robert White, "Free Trade and Sovereignty: Notes for an Address," 21 November 1986; Robert White, "Notes for an Address to the Canadian Club: the Labour Movement and Bilateral Free Trade with the United States," Toronto, 28 October 1985.

[76] Yates, *From Plant to Politics: The Autoworkers Union in Postwar Canada*, 219; Gindin, "Breaking Away: The Formation of the Canadian Auto Workers."

[77] CAW Assistant to the President, Sam Gindin indicated CAW interest in self-reliance in his comments on a 1984 panel. Sam Gindin," Notes for Address to CCPA Panel," Ottawa 1984. Gindin was part of the small group of officials around the OFL considering 'self-reliance.' Turk, Interview by author.

[78] Robert White," Address to CLC Conference on the Economy: The People's Response to the Planned Depression," Ottawa, 28 February - 1 March 1983; the relative sophistication of the analysis contained in White's speeches is notable. The perspective on free trade parallels that of class-analytical critics (see Chapter 2 above): "Free trade with the United States, for the Conservatives and their business backers, was the backdoor entrance for the neo-conservative agenda. Direct competition with the United States, along with the free flow of jobs and investment to wherever profits dictated, would achieve what electoral politics could not: it would shift the balance of power within Canada to the

The refusal to bargain concessions with employers also had important consequences for the union's political strategy. It highlighted the need to seek allies to "increase our links to other workers and other groups in society."[79] Furthermore, White gave some indication of understanding the limitations often implicit in labour's traditional approach to these relationships. He argued that "[f]orging such alliances will not come from merely adopting supportive positions: we'll have to win such groups to our side by concretely demonstrating our commitment."[80] In fact, over the course of the 1980s the CAW became increasingly critical of the CLC's ability to develop a program that would facilitate these alliances. As key CAW strategist Sam Gindin wrote to White in 1984:

> We really should expect more from our central documents. In part the problem is the labour movement's intellectuals – the church intellectuals have done much more impressive work from a left perspective – but I think it's unfair to stop at this level. More important is the context in which the intellectuals work. As long as the CLC is as bureaucratic, conservative and uninspiring as it has become, many good intellectuals will simply not want to become part of it.[81]

The CAW's attitude to alliances was also rooted in the general doctrine of 'social unionism' that Russell defines as "taking the union into the community by the pressing of extra-workplace demands."[82] The CAW's constitution explains the linkage social unionism assumes between collective bargaining and broader social and economic issues:

> Our collective bargaining strength is based on our internal organization and mobilisation, but it is also influenced by the more general climate around us: laws, policies, the economy, and social attitudes. Furthermore, our lives extend beyond collective bargaining and the workplace and we must concern

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right."Robert White," Notes for an Address to the Summit Citizens Conference," Toronto, 17 June 1988. Similarly, White endorsed a broader critique that went beyond the FTA to identify free trade at the centre of global neo-liberalism: "While we must work within GATT in the immediate future, and there exists some room to join others to lobby for change, GATT itself remains fundamentally flawed as the vehicle for managing international economic relations. This is because GATT represents the Conservative Agenda on a global scale. Its foundation is that unfettered markets and the free flow of capital will ultimately benefit everyone." Robert White, "Some Reflections on the Current Scene: Notes for an Address at the University of Ottawa," 30 March 1989.

[79] White, "Notes for an Address to the Summit Citizens Conference."

[80] Ibid.

[81] Gindin, "Confidential Memorandum to Bob White."

[82] Bob Russell, "Reinventing a Labour Movement?" in *Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice*, ed. William K. Carroll (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1997), 127.

> ourselves with issues like housing, taxation, education, medical services, the environment, the international economy. Social unionism means unionism which is rooted in the workplace but understands the importance of participating in, and influencing, the general direction of society.[83]

3.3.5 The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW)

As a CLC affiliate with a syndicalist tradition, a history of militancy, no direct ties and very little sympathy for the NDP, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) was a recent convert to the benefits of cross-sectoral alliances and took the Congress' stated commitment to coalition building very seriously. The union submitted several resolutions to the 1986 CLC convention calling for the positive sentiments expressed at Dialogue '86 to be put into action. One of these resolutions called for the Congress to "mobilize a broadly-based grassroots coalition." Another combined this sentiment with opposition to free trade and instructed the Congress "in coalition with Dialogue '86 participants (to) mount a vigorous public campaign in opposition to free trade and in favour of labour's alternative economic development program."[84]

CUPW's positive perspective on coalitions was based on ideology and on experience. The union had benefited from strong support from the women's movement in 1981 when it decided to put paid maternity leave at the top of its collective bargaining priorities. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women planned rallies, held news conferences and produced materials in aid of CUPW's demand. Julie White provides some vignettes from the campaign in her history of the union:

> In some communities the striking CUPW members were joined on the picket line by supporters, both from other unions and from women's organizations. In Ottawa a group of women formed a committee to support the maternity leave demand of the strike and a demonstration was organized in July with posters that suggested 'Treasury Board – Its Time to Deliver.'[85]

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[83] Constitution of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW).

[84] Canadian Union of Postal Workers, "Cut-backs in Social Programs," Resolution Submitted to the CLC Convention, 1986 and "Free Trade," Resolution Submitted to the CLC Convention, 1986; Bickerton, Interview by author.

[85] Julie White, *Mail and Female: Women and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers* (Toronto: Thompson, 1990), 155.

Through this experience and others, the union's leadership came to believe that cross-sectoral relationships could assist not only with their bargaining agenda but also with the union's quest to shift the political direction of the labour movement as whole.[86]

While CUPW participated in all three prongs of the CLC's Privatization, Deregulation and Free Trade campaign, its primary focus was on the more immediate threat posed to its members by privatization. The union was slower to focus its energies on free trade. The union's research director made this point and argued for a shift in the following memo to his leadership:

> Recommendations: 1) CUPW should start by admitting we have not been active enough on this issue and pledge to do more, 3) work with other public sector unions to research and publicize the effects of free trade on public sector workers, 4) prepare a pamphlet and use national journal to expose impact of free trade on postal workers and Canadians in general, 5) every speaking engagement should include a call for an election on free trade.[87]

CUPW was also among the CLC affiliates that had adopted a critical perspective on export-led development, and its staff among those involved in the formulation of alternative economic and trade policy around the OFL in the early eighties. As National President Jean-Claude Parrot repeatedly argued in his speeches in 1987 and 1988: "We say we need an economy which is more self-reliant instead of being more dependent on trade with the United States."[88] Parrot suggested that the backers of free trade were "promoting the restructuring of Canadian society. A restructuring which will strengthen the private sector and further weaken the public sector. Deregulation, privatization, free trade – the result of all of these policies will further limit the influence of the public sector in society. Instead, each of these policies will leave us more dependent on the market to determine economic growth."[89]

3.3.6 The Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU)

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[86] Bickerton, Interview by author.

[87] Geoff Bickerton, Memorandum to Jean Claude Parrot and Darrell Tingley, 4 November 1987.

[88] Jean Claude Parrot, "Notes for Address to Labour Day Rally," Windsor, Ontario, 3 September 1988.

[89] Jean Claude Parrot, "Address to the Canadian Tribune Forum on Free Trade," Toronto, 8 January 1988.

The Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU) was not a CLC affiliate but rather a minor competitor. No one was surprised when the CCU – a small labour confederation with around 30,000 members, born out of the wave of nationalist breakaways in the labour movement in the early seventies – took an early stand in opposition to free trade. The CCU's 1985 convention adopted a resolution to "condemn all movement in the direction of freer trade with the United States." Subsequent resolutions in following years reinforced this position.[90] While the CCU's small membership base was not in-itself a huge resource, the Confederation provided a number of key activists to the anti-FTA forces that was far out of proportion to its own membership base. In BC, Sue Vohanka and Jeff Keighley, in Manitoba Susan Spratt and in Toronto, John Lang and Laurell Ritchie (respectively, CCU secretary-treasurer and vice-president) all played early and important roles in the mobilization of opposition to the deal, as well as being central players in the development of local coalitions.[91]

The CCU's position evolved beyond a straight left-nationalist opposition to continental integration. A policy paper adopted by the CCU proposed the following elements of an alternative to free trade: "fuller trade with a wider variety of nations, limiting foreign ownership, expanding the manufacturing and secondary industry base, and the *self-reliant* development of our industries."[92] The CCU's support for self-reliance can be traced back to a joint project in the early 1980s between the CCU-affiliated Canadian Textile and Chemical Union and the ecumenical coalition GATT-Fly to develop self-reliance strategies for textile industry.[93]

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[90] Confederation of Canadian Unions, "Free Trade," Resolution 14 Submitted to the CLC Convention, 1985.

[91] Confirmed in various personal interviews; see also Bleyer, "Coalition Building and the Canadian Popular Sector."

[92] Executive Board Confederation of Canadian Unions, "Policy on Free Trade," Vancouver, 1-2 February 1987.

[93] Turk, Interview by author and Laurell Ritchie, Interview by author, Toronto, 2 March 1991. In the follow-up to the Dialogue '86 conference, CCU representative Laurell Ritchie received a memorandum from CLC vice-president Dick Martin addressed to all conference participants. The memorandum ends: "There was considerable enthusiasm for this project (i.e., work on the FTA) at the time of our Conference in January and I can only hope that the anticipated linkage between our organizations on this issue can become a reality." While these words were not specifically addressed to the CCU, this unintentional message reflects the spirit of the moment. Martin, "Letter to Laurell Ritchie."

3.3.7 The CLC and the FTA

As affiliates from different sectors and regions unravelled the implications of free trade for their members and engaged in coalition politics at varying paces and to differing degrees, a few critical moments in the evolution of the CLC's own approach to the FTA stand out. The hiring of economist Mel Watkins in the fall of 1987 was one significant signal of a commitment to take up the free trade challenge. It was a potent symbol of the CLC's transformation since the days of the left-nationalist Waffle opposition within the NDP of which Watkins had been a leader. Because he reported directly to CLC president Carr, Watkins had the access and influence to make an important contribution to anti-free trade work in the labour movement and beyond. Here again, the influence of an affiliate was evident since CLC and Canadian Union of Public Employees officials confirm that Carr – previously an elected officer with CUPE – was convinced to bring Watkins on board by Gil Levine, CUPE's Research Director.[94]

Later, in May 1988 after more than six months of internal debate, the CLC's affiliates finally accepted a thirty cent per capita dues assessment to finance the campaign against free trade.[95] As far as one member of the Congress national executive is concerned, "we clearly made the decision to make free trade a priority item with the special assessment."[96] It is interesting to note that the decision on the per capita assessment came during a meeting that also saw then Council of Canadians chairperson Mel Hurtig give an hour long presentation.[97] While it would be inappropriate to draw a direct causal relationship between Hurtig's appearance and the per capita decision, the timing is symbolic of the pressures that brought the Congress to the forefront of the free trade fight.

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[94] Katz, Interview by author and Mel Watkins, Interview by author, Toronto, 4 March 1992.

[95] Minutes, PCN, Fourth Assembly, Ottawa, 19-20 June 1988; CLC campaign coordinator Larry Wagg noted that .30 per capita had been requested for the campaign at the CLC's National Political Action Committee meeting on 22 October 1987. Wagg, Interview by author. See also Geoff Bickerton, "Notes from CLC's National Political Action Committee Special Meeting," CUPW file 301-A-228-D, 22 October 1987.

[96] Riche, Interview by author.

[97] Minutes, Canadian Labour Congress, Executive Council, Ottawa, 4 May 1988; see also PCN First Assembly Minutes.

Both the Watkins hiring and the per capita decision were preceeded by the Canada Summit where labour was an important participant with leaders of several unions at the table. In fact, as a newcomer to the national labour leadership, Congress vice-president Nancy Riche was surprised at the number of high-level labour representatives who "showed up on a weekend." As far as Riche was concerned, the Congress had not yet realized the importance of free trade at this point, although it was apparent that some of the affiliates like the CAW and others might have.[98] Slow to jump on the free trade bandwagon, the CLC was also sluggish in adapting to the changing circumstances for coalition building. When first approached by senior Council of Canadians representatives about possible cooperation on free trade, the Congress leadership appear to have responded in a rather defensive manner. The minutes of a meeting recording this response are worthy of extensive quotation:

> Sister Carr explained that she had been contacted by Marion Dewar, John Fryer and Grace Hartman requesting that the Council of Canadians be accepted into our coalition. They have no money for a campaign of their own but want to join us in ours. Those present were in favour of letting them join in our coalition, but that it must be made clear that the Congress is leading this campaign; they are only 'individuals,' they don't represent anyone and the Congress must be seen to be 'out front'; they will have to be monitored and this should be made clear to Mel Hurtig.[99]

While some allowance for the vagaries of minute taking may be in order, the tone of these minutes fits with a broader assessment of the CLC's attitude towards coalitions during this period. Indeed, a textual analysis of Congress documents referring to coalition formation reveals, what one labour official refers to as, a "language or discourse of domination and manipulation."[100]

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[98] Riche, Interview by author.

[99] Minutes, Canadian Labour Congress, Executive Committee, Ottawa, 15 August 1986.

[100] Turk, Interview by author. Examples of this attitude include the following reference in CLC Executive Committee Minutes: "Sister Carr reported ... the Congress is in the initial stages of contacting other organizations to form a coalition, as we have done in the past, to help with the campaign." CLC Executive Committee Minutes, 15 August 1986. In a letter to Congress Executive Council members introducing the Social Solidarity Declaration, the CLC president refers to "a number of organizations which have been a part of our coalition." Shirley Carr, Letter to CLC Executive Council, 14 July 1987. At a subsequent meeting of the CLC Executive Council, the United Steelworkers of America's representative is recorded as calling for "the Congress to be seen as the leader of these coalitions." PCN First Assembly Minutes.

4. The Women's movement

4.1 NAC and coalition building

The second wave of feminism was perhaps the most important of the emerging social forces in the 1960s. Established by the federal Liberal government in 1967, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) received 468 briefs, more than 1,000 letters of opinion, and heard more than 890 witnesses during public hearings.[101] Canadian women's groups had lobbied for the creation of the commission under the banner of the Committee for the Equality of Women starting in 1966. After the release of the RCSW report in 1971, these groups reformed as the National Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women in order to monitor implementation of its 167 recommendations. One year later, at five hundred women representing a broad range of organizations attending the Strategy for Change conference founded the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC).[102]

NAC's structure borrowed from previous initiatives in the women's movement. In fact, NAC was the high point in the broader mode of development of Canadian feminism described by Vickers as follows:

> The history of the Canadian women's movement is characterized by a propensity to create umbrella structures based on the membership of groups of different sizes, types and orientations and by a succession of effective coalitions based on elite accommodation.[103]

Starting at thirty, membership would rise to 230 groups in 1982 and more than 500 by 1988.[104] As an umbrella structure, NAC brought together a wide range of women's organizations whose diversity was geographic, ideological, strategic, structural and

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[101] Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: the Politics of Canadian Nationalism*, 137-8; Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women*, 20-21; see also Sylvia Bashevkin, "Free Trade and Canadian Feminism: The Case of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women," *Canadian Public Policy* XV, no. 4 (1989).

[102] Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: the Politics of Canadian Nationalism*, 137; Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women*, 77.

[103] Vickers, "Bending the Iron Law of Oligarchy: Debates on Feminization of Organization and Political Process in the English Canadian Women's Movement, 1970-1988," 88.

[104] Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women*, 20.

generational.[105] Based on the NAC experience. Vickers et al. challenge the assumption of most scholarship on the women's movement that posits a break between the concerns of first and second wave feminism. They argue that,

> an approach that discounts continuities between periods of mobilization in Canada makes an analysis of NAC extremely difficult. With its hybrid political culture and its coalitions of old and new forces, NAC's very existence constitutes a repudiation of such a view.[106]

As long as it retained within its membership groups representing Liberal and Conservative ideologies, NAC was relatively reflective of the full Canadian ideological spectrum. As its ideological scope shifted through the 1980s with the participation of women's organizations from an increasingly broad range of sectors, NAC became something approaching a gendered microcosm of the emerging popular sector. NAC internalized the cross-sectoral coalition model both structurally and instrumentally. The election of Grace Hartman as president in 1974 symbolized this fact. As secretary-treasurer of CUPE, Hartman – a lifelong public sector worker – was the second highest-ranking officer of Canada's largest union. Her dual roles – with NAC and CUPE – were a reflection of the emergence of a 'working class feminism' that was becoming a distinct current in the women's movement.[107] Through the 1970s

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[105] "NAC's role as an umbrella structure has been to organize a coalition of groups and ideological forces within the Canadian women's movement. structurally the groups affiliated include the following types: (1) pan-Canadian, chapter-based groups (top-down organizing), (2) pan-Canadian groups based on individual membership, (3) alliance umbrellas which focus on the provincial state and which re-group organizations of disparate sizes, (4) national federations of local groups, (5) national regional/provincial networks of service groups, (6) single-issue coalitions, (7) local groups, collectives, centres, services." In Vickers, "Bending the Iron Law of Oligarchy: Debates on Feminization of Organization and Political Process in the English Canadian Women's Movement, 1970-1988," 88.

"Umbrella organizations and coalitions have become an important form of feminist organization as the women's movement has come to comprise many organizations with clearly defined political analyses, strategies, and goals. The positive aspect of this way of organizing is that it focuses on what large numbers of organizations and individuals within the movement can agree on, and is thus able to validate the differences among groups while concentrating on their share viewpoints. This type of gaining presents a powerful unified face to the work and is often effective in achieving change. The challenge is to present at the same time the complexity and diversity of the women's movement." Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 245-46.

[106] Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women*, 35-36. Implicit in this assessment is a critique of any analytical framework (e.g. NMT) that fails to recognize these continuities.

[107] Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 124.

and 1980s, a series of trade union activists served on NAC's executive and union women were involved at all levels of the organization.[108]

Because of its own structure and composition, NAC was predisposed to cooperating on single-issue campaigns with outside groups sometimes including forming cross-sectoral coalitions. Yet, while NAC's own campaigns and activities appeared to internalize and prefigure cross-sectoral alliances, Vickers et al. identify a certain reticence to broader coalition building – i.e., beyond its gender base. This hesitancy was rooted both in more separatist strands of feminist ideology and in the experience of smaller grassroots member groups that felt that alliances at the leadership level removed decision-making from their control.[109] In contrast, the increasing influence of union or working class feminism created a strong voice for collaboration with the labour movement. Many of these women were also 'socialist feminists' and their political perspective created pressure for even broader alliances that could bring about social transformation beyond NAC's own core constituency's gendered demands.[110]

Building on its roots in first and second wave feminism, which had played a critical role in the development of the peace movement in Canada through the Voice of Women (VOW) as well as anti-war and native rights struggles, NAC and its member organizations did engage in joint campaigns beyond the limits of the

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[108] See Chapter 5 in Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women;* see also Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 79; Cohen, Interview by author; Ritchie, Interview by author; Susan Spratt, Interview by author, Winnipeg, 7 December 1991. At the height of the anti-FTA campaign in 1988 Lynne Kaye, the labour lawyer who co-chaired the Employment Committee, became NAC president. Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women*, 183.

[109] Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women*, 221.

[110] Adamson identifies some of the tensions and dilemmas socialist feminism brought to NAC and the women's movement as a whole: "the socialist-feminist belief in the necessity of a fundamental social transformation that challenges not only gender relations but also relations of class, race, and sexual orientation implies a commitment to the building of a mass heterogeneous political movement. In principle this means forming alliances with organizations outside the women's movement, such as trade unions and progressive community groups that organize around peace, anti-racism, and environmental issues, and, if they exist, parliamentary and extra parliamentary socialist and communist parties. In all these cases such a commitment also means organizing with men, which raises complex questions about the relation between the building of such alliances and autonomous feminist organizing." Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*, 252.

women's movement.[111] The abortion caravan that crossed Canada in 1970 pre-dated NAC but represented cooperative campaigning between feminists and other movements. A series of advocacy coalitions and campaigns for childcare, equal pay and choice, and against the deindexing of pensions and family allowances were formed in the 1970s and 1980s. In most cases, NAC's key partner in these endeavours was the labour movement, often represented by the CLC.[112] Vickers et al. argue that these coalitions – they refer specifically to the efforts around universal childcare and family allowance deindexation – enhanced NAC's effectiveness in terms of affecting public policy.[113] In addition, they suggest that the *ad hoc* coalition on family allowances made NAC "an equal partner with the CLC and the CCCB."[114] Since the CLC and the labour movement formed the most prominent axis for NAC's alliances during this period, joint initiatives tended to relate in some way to women's employment though they were not limited by this focus. In fact, cooperation took place around a broad range of social policy concerns including social benefit programs, childcare, and reproductive choice.

4.2 The Macdonald Commission and Free Trade

On the day prior to the release of the Macdonald Commission's final report, NAC issued a press release stating its position on bilateral free trade:

> NAC recognizes the value of enhancing Canada's international trade and does not take an isolationist position. But we feel women in this country have a great deal at stake in this issue and that the effect on women's labour has not been taken into account. A bilateral comprehensive trade agreement with the US will have a disproportionately severe impact on women workers.[115]

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[111] One important example is the women's movement's historic engagement in the peace movement. The Voice of Women was founded on July 28, 1960, "to unite women in concern for the future of the world" and "to provide a means for women to exercise responsibility for the family of humankind." By the fall of 1961 this non-partisan women's organization had a membership of 5,000 and a newsletter with a circulation of over 10,000. Anti-war and native rights movement's also featured strong participation by feminists. Ibid., 45.

[112] Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women*, 143.

[113] Ibid., 220.

[114] Ibid., 221.

[115] NAC, News Release, Chateau Laurier, Ottawa, 4 September 1985; see also Marjorie Cohen, "The Macdonald Report and its Implications for Women," *Feminist Action*, December 1985. Both publications were based on a resolution opposition free trade adopted at NAC's 1984 AGM. See

While the Macdonald Commission's recommendation of bilateral free trade as an economic policy panacea was the brightest incoming target on NAC's radar screen, the commission's social policy advice, specifically for reforming the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and implementing an incomes policy was also of concern.[116] NAC had been tracking the Macdonald process through its Employment and Economy Committee. As co-chair of this committee, and a NAC vice-president, economist Marjorie Cohen led NAC's attack on free trade.[117] The committee was largely made up of Toronto-based union feminists and economists most of whom were keen to take up free trade as their central focus.[118]

At NAC's 1987 AGM, delegates unanimously endorsed a resolution opposing the negotiation of a free trade agreement.[119] The starting point for NAC's critique of free trade was employment. NAC argued that job losses in vulnerable manufacturing sectors would impact hardest on women and that there would be little prospect of re-employment for those affected. In addition, NAC claimed that women's jobs in the service sector would be undermined. But the critique was not limited to these 'direct' effects of free trade. NAC argued that the cost of free trade would be highest for disadvantaged groups in society including women through indirect impacts on social policy. As Vickers comments, "[NAC] assumed that the liberation of women required state programs and that these were threatened by the proposed Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement."[120]

Marjorie Cohen, "The Anatomy of the Decision: The Efforts of Coalitions," in *The Free Trade Agreement of 1988: Implications for the Future of Canadian-American Relations*, ed. Jane Jenson (Boston: Harvard University, Centre for International Affairs, 1989).

[116] Marjorie Cohen, "Presentation to the Ontario Cabinet Subcommittee on Free Trade," National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Toronto, 10 October 1987.

[117] See Chapter 1 above on Cohen's role in lobbying trade union representatives on the importance of free trade at Dialogue '86 event.

[118] Ritchie, Interview by author; Cohen, Interview by author; Spratt, Interview by author; see also Isa Bakker, "Free Trade Could be Costly for Women Workers," *Feminist Action*, October 1985.

[119] NAC, "AGM Delegates Approve New NAC Policies," *Feminist Action*, July 1987.

[120] Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women*, 273; see also NAC, "Free Trade: A Bad Deal for Women; Here's Why and What To Do..." Pamphlet, 1988; Bakker, "Free Trade Could be Costly for Women Workers"; Cohen, "Presentation to the Ontario Cabinet Subcommittee on Free Trade."

Some Toronto-based feminists formed an organization intended to focus solely on free trade. Women Against Free Trade (WAFT) emphasized the promotion of alternatives over opposing the proposed

4.3 The CAFT and Pro-Canada Network

Despite the organization's national scope, NAC's leadership was largely Toronto-based. This was particularly true of the members of the Employment Committee that was focusing its energies on free trade. As a result, NAC representatives were involved from the outset in the formation of the Toronto-based Coalition Against Free Trade (CAFT). In fact, the first meeting of CAFT, billed as exploratory, was sponsored by NAC and held in its offices. As Laurel Ritchie, a NAC Employment Committee member and one of the organizers explains, NAC was viewed as the kind of neutral territory where the diverse groups might feel most comfortable:

> We were aware of differences within the labour movement – between federations as well as between individual unions and between the cultural community, the social policy community and the churches. We had to try to be as neutral as possible to allow as many different constituencies as possible to at a minimum come out to explore the issue.[121]

The role played by NAC leaders in the founding of the Coalition against Free Trade was a smaller scale version of the function of feminist activists in drawing together the two parallel tracks of opposition to free trade and coalition building leading to the formation of the Pro-Canada Network in the spring of 1987.

5. Conclusion

In spite of their differences, by the late 1980s the Canadian labour, women's and ecumenical justice movements were among a myriad of sectors united in their opposition to the FTA and engaged in a major coalition effort to give their opposition effect. That cross-sectoral coalition building was practically intrinsic to the Canadian women's movement was reflected in the structure of NAC, which could be considered

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FTA. WAFT's formation was driven by the view that "the anti-free trade campaign as a whole badly needed something more than a collection of sectoral critiques and nationalist laments." Varda Burstyn and Judy Rebick, "How Women Against Free Trade came to Write its Manifesto," *Resources for Feminist Research* XVII, no. 3 (1989): 139.

This perspective was not unique to WAFT but was rarely voiced elsewhere as energies were focused on the shorter-term objectives of blocking the negotiation and implementation of a Canada-U.S. FTA. See Chapters 5, 6 and 7 below.

[121] Ritchie, Interview by author.

a gendered microcosm of the popular sector.[122] Like some elements in the women's movement, ecumenical social justice activists were practitioners of the consensus decision-making model that would later be adopted by the Pro-Canada Network. Church activists carried with them a long and extensive experience with ecumenical justice coalitions, a clear commitment to cross-sectoral alliances as well as a record of reflection on the model itself. In his assessment of these coalitions drafted in the early 1980s, Lucal identified problems with coalition formation that bear an astonishing resemblance to issues later faced by the PCN.[123] Within the labour movement, extra-parliamentary alliances and coalitions played second fiddle, first, to a traditional interest advocacy model, then to a flirtation with tripartism and, of course, the relationship with the NDP. Even when labour accepted and then tentatively embraced coalition building, the commitment and enthusiasm varied between public and private, industrial and resource-based unions, as well as regionally. In any case, the coalition model more often than not adopted by the CLC was both simplistic and ham-fisted, perhaps inevitably so given labour's overwhelming institutional weight in the popular sector. Nevertheless, there were important differences on this score between the Congress and some of its own affiliates.

The three sectors also tackled the trade issue from different angles. Church social justice advocates developed their understanding of trade liberalization from an analysis that viewed global poverty as rooted in a post-colonial model of economic dependency. The Canadian labour movement slowly moved beyond its own continentalism and through sectoral analysis arrived at a substantive critique of free trade. Not surprisingly, NAC developed a gendered cross-sectoral analysis of the

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[122] "Political action by the women's movement has had much to do with the emergence of popular-sector politics in the 1980s. A source of inspiration and thought, feminist groups have also provided a new way of seeing political issues and struggles." Cameron, "Political Discourse in the Eighties," 79.

[123] Lucal identified the problem of "interlocking directorships." He described advantages such as "better coordination and atmosphere of trust, development of similar views," as well as disadvantages including "elitism, marginalization of non-staff members...less diffusion to and input from grassroots elements ... resulting in narrower involvement of laity as a whole, plus an overloading of church social action staff." Lucal, "Coalitions for Social Ecumenism: the Canadian Story." See Chapter 7 below for an assessment of the relevance of these factors to the development of the PCN/ACN.

FTA. This concluded with a prescient warning of the threat to social policy and the social programs that increasingly came to define Canadian specificity in this period.

At different paces, all three sectors moved beyond their more narrowly defined 'self-interest.' For the women's movement this process was likely inevitable given its history, its own umbrella structure and the influential role of a socialist feminist politic within it. From the outset, the ecumenical critique of trade liberalization did not bear the imprint of sectoral interest. While the employment implications of free trade were its central concern, the labour movement never entirely limited its position on the FTA to this point, however important.

The convergence of interests and initiatives from labour, women's and ecumenical justice movements would form the core around which an even broader coalition of concern with the Canada-U.S. FTA would be formed. The evolving analysis and tactics adopted within these three key sectors were also subject to substantial cross-pollination through personal and organizational relationships in the early and mid-1980s.[124] The intervention by the Catholic bishops in 1983, and by NAC at the Dialogue '86 event three years later, stand out as critical moments in a process that transformed the Canadian labour movement's stance on free trade and opened up space for trade unions to consider coalition politics. At the same time, internal forces within the labour movement itself were driving its agenda in this direction.

Despite the momentum being generated in the three key sectors dealt with in this chapter it would take an initiative from another quarter to generate a structured alliance and common campaign out of the Canadian popular sector's engagement with free trade and flirtation with coalition politics.

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[124] See Chapter 1 above.

Chapter 4

The Free Trade Election

1. Introduction

Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s important relationships were built within and between Canadian social movement sectors. Conferences and cross-sectoral single-issue campaigns contributed to a variety of organizational and personal ties. In a changing economic and political context, coalition building was emerging within the labour movement as a strategic alternative to tripartism. Meanwhile, the women's, environmental, and peace movements, among others, had gained an appreciation for the benefits of this strategy in their own work. At the same time, by the middle of the decade, the proposed FTA had become a central policy focus for a variety of sectors and their organizations. Women, farmers, church activists and seniors, along with labour and others were progressively uncovering the implications of a bilateral trade agreement for their respective constituencies.[1]

The identification of the FTA as the centrepiece in capital's agenda set the stage for cross-sectoral movement convergence, first around the trade issue, and second, due to the nature of the FTA, around a broader agenda. As it follows the formation of the Pro-Canada Network, this chapter will continue the task of documenting the argument that the success of movement convergence was a direct result of the particular nature of the Free Trade Agreement as a political issue in the context of the Canadian social and economic formation. The FTA served as a distillation of a broader dominant socio-economic agenda and provided the basis for a convergence of concerns. In this context, the formation of the Pro-Canada Network was the product of a process of interpretive analysis of the FTA and organizational interaction by the constituencies making up the popular sector.

Against the background of close to a decade of developing relationships, the nature of the trade issue and the immediacy of the fight against the FTA were the driving forces behind the relative institutionalization of cooperation and evolution of a broader common political agenda. From the moment of its formation forward, the

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[1] See Chapter 3 above.

PCN constituted an initial institutional terrain, in terms of structure and process, for the further development of convergence – both the rearticulation of identities and discourses and the democratization of the popular sector – through regular information sharing, strategic debate and the organizing of collective action.

This chapter follows the formation of the Pro-Canada Network culminating with its participation in the 1988 federal election campaign.

2. The Council of Canadians

The increasingly clear continentalist orientation of the Mulroney government and its corporate allies revived some of the nationalist sentiment more or less demobilized by the Liberal government's initial nationalist response to the economic crisis in the early 1980s.[2] One month following the release of the Macdonald Report in 1985, the Council of Canadians was founded in Ottawa. Prominent Canadian nationalists assembled by Mel Hurtig, a western book publisher, one-time federal Liberal candidate and former Committee for an Independent Canada organizer, committed themselves to "creating the most widely based coalition possible of Canadians in favour of maximizing Canadian cultural, economic and political sovereignty and autonomous development, and to work for a consensus among Canadians for this goal."[3]

The Council was, in the first instance, the coming together of committed, high profile individuals personally stirred to action by Hurtig.[4] The group's early membership and program drew heavily on the experience of the Committee for an Independent Canada (CIC). Founded in February 1970 by former federal Liberal cabinet minister Walter Gordon, journalist Peter C. Newman and economist Abraham Rotstein, the CIC had promoted Canadian nationalist causes – primarily of the

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[2] On the impact of early Trudeau policies on nationalist ferment, see Russell, "The Return of the Nationalists."

[3] Council of Canadians, "Goals and Priorities," (1986); see also Council of Canadians, "Statement of Purpose," (1986) and John Trent, Memorandum to Council of Canadians Board of Directors, 11 March 1986.

[4] According to Maude Barlow, Hurtig's personal role in the formation of the Council cannot be overestimated. Maude Barlow, Interview by author, Ottawa, 29 October 1991.

investment but also of the cultural variety – up until its dissolution in the fall of 1980. The committee's constitution set out the following objectives: "The Committee is concerned with exploring the advantages of the Canadian economy becoming more independent; less dependent on imports of foreign capital, foreign technology, and foreign-manufactured goods; and, less dependent on exports, particularly exports of largely unprocessed materials."[5] The CIC's core group included prominent Liberals and Conservatives united by their support for government action on foreign investment and their unwillingness to accept, following the Waffle, "socialism as a precondition for independence."[6] By the mid-1980s, overwhelming support for a continentalist project amongst Conservatives and on the right of the Liberal Party changed the mix that would constitute the Council of Canadians. In terms of partisan affiliation, some prominent supporters of the NDP, including past leader T.C. Douglas, City of Ottawa Mayor Marion Dewar and CUPE's Grace Hartman, now joined Liberals in forming the Council.[7]

3. The Canada Summit

Two separate but interrelated processes were underway. On one hand, different constituencies within the popular sector were progressively uncovering the implications of free trade for their sectors and, in many cases, coalescing at the provincial level.[8] On the other hand, nationalism was undergoing a rebirth as Canadians mobilized to oppose the federal government's continentalist orientation. As Canada's foremost nationalist organization, the Council of Canadians was a key player in this process.

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[5] Appended to Nydia McCool and Dennis Conly, "The Committee for an Independent Canada: Historical and Background Information," Committee for an Independent Canada, 1979. McCool and Conly provide details of the CIC's objectives and mandate. Bashevkin provides a categorization of the variants of Canadian nationalism in Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: the Politics of Canadian Nationalism.*

[6] Rotstein quoted in Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: the Politics of Canadian Nationalism*, 23. On the dynamic between the left-nationalist Waffle and the CIC, see also McCall Newman, "Growing Up Reluctantly."

[7] Council of Canadians, News Release, 11 March 1985 and various documents in Council files. Background on Council's formation also from Barlow, Interview by author.

[8] On sectoral developments, see Chapter 3. For an overview of the provincial coalitions, see Bleyer, "Coalition Building and the Canadian Popular Sector."

The Council developed a new strategy rooted in an understanding of its own limitations. By uniting key individual opinion makers and public figures at the forefront of a small individual membership organization – in April 1987 some 3,000 members – the Council had more or less replicated the model established by its predecessor, the Committee for an Independent Canada, replacing Red Tories with some, post-Waffle, chastened New Democrats. Increasingly the realization was setting in that this approach was not proving to be an effective one for the task at hand.[9]

The Council now proposed to reach out to other organizations and facilitate their coming together. One of Council's co-chairs at the time describes this new approach as follows:

> I believed that we could never do it on our own, both financially and in numbers, and that there were a lot of other people out there that were opposed to free trade. And that we therefore had to become the lynchpin and inspiration for creating a 'coalition against free trade.'[10]

To fulfill this objective the Council's, two co-chairs, Trent and Maude Barlow, approached a series of groups they believed might be interested. They also selected the upcoming third summit meeting between Canadian prime minister Mulroney and U.S. president Reagan as a symbolically appropriate moment to concretize their hopes for a new alliance. Trent and Barlow cast their nets very wide, approaching groups ranging from the Canadian Federation of Students to the Canadian Association of Police Chiefs.[11] As it turned out, most of the positive responses they received came from groups already identified, through work around the Macdonald Commission

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[9] Confirmed in Barlow, Interview by author; see also Cameron, "A Game With New Rules" and Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: the Politics of Canadian Nationalism*, 27. John Trent, the CIC's policy director, describes his role in "shutting it down" in 1981. From his perspective, the CIC's passing was a consequence of a combination of a job well done and the unwillingness of business funders to back a necessary shift to the left. John Trent, Interview by author, Ottawa, 12 March 1992. Commenting on CIC founder Walter Gordon's attempts to elicit backing from private sector friends, member Robin Matthews said: "The Canadian bourgeoisie told Gordon to go suck eggs." Quoted in Russell, "The Return of the Nationalists."

[10] Trent, Interview by author.

[11] The groups they approached included: Canadian Frozen Food Association, Canadian Food Processors Association, Canadian Council of Furniture Manufacturers, Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors, Canadian Toy Manufacturers Association, Association of BC Grape Growers, and the Canadian Drug Manufacturers Association. See Canada Summit Correspondence, Council of Canadians files.

process, as part of the popular sector consensus. Some of these groups were included in the planning process and participated in negotiating the format and content in the run up to summit.[12]

On 4 April 1987, close to one hundred representatives of thirty-two national organizations including the CLC, NAC, National Farmers Union (NFU) and the interchurch coalition GATT-Fly came together at Ottawa's Chateau Laurier for the Canada Summit.[13] Around the table, representatives shared their respective concerns with the project that was rapidly moving to the top of the Conservative government's agenda: the proposed Canada-U. S. FTA. The session concluded with unanimous agreement with the sentiments expressed in the "Canada Summit Declaration" drafted by the organizers. In it they declared:

> We, the delegates to the Canada Summit, representing organizations whose members form a majority of the Canadian electorate,
>
> Demand that no Agreement of this kind be signed without first having been submitted to the Canadian people for their explicit approval,
>
> Declare that, in the absence of prior approval, the Government of Canada, by signing the Agreement, would commit an undemocratic and illegitimate act.[14]

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[12] Information on summit planning is from Council of Canadians files and Barlow, Interview by author, Trent, Interview by author.

[13] Participating organizations: Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA), Canadian Apparel Manufacturers Institute, Canadian Artists Representation, Canadian Chicken Marketing Agency, Canadian Coalition Against Media Pornography, Canadian Conference of the Arts, Canadian Council on Social Development, Canadian Ethnocultural Council, Canadian Federation of Students, Brewery and Soft Drink Workers, Canadian Auto Workers, National Union of Provincial Government Employees, Canadian Nature Federation, Canadian Teachers Federation, Inuit from North West Territories, Assembly of First Nations, Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec, La Coalition québecoise en opposition au libre-échange, Confédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, l'union des producteurs agricoles, National Anti-Poverty Organization, National Association of Friendship Centres, National Federation of Nurses Unions, Operation Dismantle, Playwrights Union of Canada, Pollution Probe Foundation, and Project Ploughshares. In Council of Canadians, "Spring Newsletter," (1987), 5.

The working title for the summit was the Forum for a Sane Trade Policy. It was also subsequently referred to as the Maple Leaf Summit. See Canada Summit Correspondence, Council of Canadians files.

[14] PCN, "Canada Summit Declaration," 4 April 1987; also in Charles Bauer, "The Shamrock Summit: A Weekend of Dissent," *Canadian Labour*, May 1987; Council of Canadians' executive member and University of Ottawa professor Theo Geraets prepared the initial draft of the summit declaration. Confirmed in Barlow, Interview by author, Trent, Interview by author. Vice-President Nancy Riche presented the declaration in draft form to the Executive Council of the CLC prior to the April summit. PCN First Assembly Minutes.

The text of the "Canada Summit Declaration," as well as a list of participants and an announcement of the formation of the PCN are included in Council of Canadians, "Spring Newsletter"; for an early media assessment of the PCN's potential impact, see Hugh Winsor, "Free Trade Conference Lets

At the close of the general meeting, a smaller group was convened with John Trent serving as chair. Leading members of the Council of Canadians – Trent. Hurtig, Barlow – were joined by representatives of the labour movement, including CLC president Shirley Carr and vice-president Nancy Riche, and a number of others like National Farmers Union president Wayne Easter. Whereas the larger assembly had arrived at a consensus on the public demand that a free trade agreement be subject to democratic approval through a general election, this smaller gathering established some parameters for cooperation between the various groups towards achieving this goal. Agreement was reached on a few basic propositions: first and foremost, the umbrella grouping for FTA opponents would be called the Pro-Canada Network. The fact that it would be named and, consequently, defined as a network reflected the reticence of some participants – in this case, the CLC in particular – to form a coalition. The decision was based on participants understanding that a 'network' did not carry the same burden of political consensus and collective financial responsibility as might be implied by a 'coalition.'[15]

Unlike previous key events in the formation of the popular sector during the early and mid-1980s – sessions following the release of *Ethical Reflections*, and Dialogue '86 for example – the Canada Summit concluded with a clear decision to cooperate, a commitment that was reinforced by the founding of a new organization. Previous popular sector gatherings had held out the promise of such a development but had repeatedly failed to deliver. In retrospect, it appears that these prior events prepared the ground for eventual success.

While the formation of the Pro-Canada Network was a step forward, this new coalition-type formation was nonetheless characterized from its inception by a

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Nationalist Genie Out of Bottle," *Globe and Mail*, 6 April 1987, A2.

[15] Based on his recollection of events, John Trent provides an interesting assessment of the CLC's perspective: "Mrs. Carr was there and the unions said they would not join a *coalition*. Their experience during the 1970s and the 1980s had taught them two things. They provided the power and money but were never allowed to take leadership as one member of a coalition. Secondly, they found that they (the coalitions) were fairly badly managed and that they were usually left with two things, policies that were untenable – too extreme for their membership – and holding the financial bag. So while they approved of everything that we were doing, they didn't want a coalition of that nature. I think it was Mel Hurtig who suggested: why don't we call it a Network, where everyone keeps their own independence." Trent, Interview by author.

number of serious limitations. The decision on the name – network rather than coalition – itself reflected the limits of the consensus achieved. Participants in the second, 'private,' session at the summit understood that the agreement of a number of parties to proceed with some sort of collective organization to move forward with the spirit of the summit declaration was dependent on acceptance of the flexible and relatively informal network model.[16]

At this stage the new formation was also hampered by its lack of a pan-Canadian base. Other than the Coalition québecoise en opposition au libre-échange, none of the provincial coalitions already active on free trade were represented at the summit. So while the PCN seemed poised to benefit from the rich variety of experiences brought to its discussions by a wide-range of sectors through national organizations, its ability to act from coast-to-coast appeared to be severely circumscribed.[17]

Within months of the Canada Summit even the breadth of the Network at the national level looked somewhat less impressive than advertised. Although more than thirty-two national organizations attended the summit in April, a listing of the Pro-Canada Network's membership in September 1987 includes only eleven national organizations.[18] Apparently, a number of groups remained reticent to translate their agreement with the basic demands made in the summit declaration into participation in an umbrella grouping clearly committed to opposing the proposed FTA. Nevertheless, the new Network's potential was reflected in the relative importance of the groups that remained around the table. The Canadian Labour Congress

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[16] Ibid.; Riche, Interview by author.

[17] Phillips provides an interesting description of the limitations of national organizations in the Canadian context in "Meaning and Structure in Social Movements: Mapping the Network of National Canadian Women's Organizations," 776.

On the provincial social justice coalitions active in several provinces in the mid to late 1980s, see Bleyer, "Coalition Building and the Canadian Popular Sector."

[18] The organizations listed are: Assembly of First Nations, CLC, ACTRA, NFU, COC, GATT-Fly, One Voice Seniors Network, NAC, Canadian Teachers' Federation, the National Anti-Poverty Organization and the Coalition québecoise. PCN, "Membership List," (1987). In a series of letters dated April 26, 1987, Maude Barlow listed only five organizations other than the Council as members of the PCN. These were the AFN, ACTRA, CTF, NAC and the NFU. Canada Summit Correspondence in Council of Canadians files.

represented more than two million workers through its affiliated unions. Key affiliates such as the CAW and CUPE claimed large memberships in the hundreds of thousands and, like the CLC, these unions and their leaders sported relatively high public profiles. As the lead Canadian feminist organization, itself with more than 500 member groups, NAC carried a record of "relative political success" in the 1980s into the PCN.[19] While the 10,000 members and $40,000 "war chest" the Council of Canadians lay claim to in 1988 was less than overwhelming, the organization's strengths included prominent supporters and a relatively high profile leadership.[20] Other groups were also far from negligible, including the federation representing all Canadian schoolteachers, the AFN representing 600 native band councils and through them more than 300,000 aboriginal Canadians and GATT-Fly with its mandate from the mainline Christian churches.

4. Bringing in the Provinces

Over the course of the summer of 1987, representatives of some of the national organizations attending meetings of the nascent Network became increasingly aware of its weaknesses. Just as the limited number of national groups participating in the PCN posed a problem, the absence of representation from regional and provincial coalitions was raised as a serious obstacle to success. As a result, a September meeting of the Network mandated three people – Larry Wagg (CLC), Dennis Howlett (GATT-Fly), and Tony Clarke (CCCB) – to explore the possibility of inviting provincial groups to participate.[21]

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[19] Bashevkin contrasts NAC's record favourably with those of feminist organizations in the UK and US. Sylvia Bashevkin, "Losing Common Ground: Feminists, Conservatives and Public Policy in Canada during the Mulroney Years," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* XXIX, no. 2 (1996), 212. Much of NAC's momentum in this period was generated by the women's movements key role in lobbying for equality rights during the repatriation of the Canadian constitution in 1981-82. According to one senior Member of Parliament at the time, "the constitutional lobby was a watershed period for the Canadian women's movement, establishing it as a major political force." Walter McLean, PC MP quoted in Penney Kome, *The Taking of Twenty Eight: Women Challenge the Constitution* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1983), 66. On this period, see also Penney Kome, *Women of Influence: Canadian Women and Politics* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1985). See also Chapter 3 above.

[20] Membership and budget information is from Mel Hurtig, *At Twilight in the Country, Memoirs of a Canadian Nationalist*, 296-300.

[21] Discussion of regional representation is recorded in the minutes of PCN meetings on from May to October 1987. See, in particular, interventions by Dennis Howlett (June 1, 1987) and Tony Clarke (October 7, 1987). For the mandating of Wagg, Howlett and Clarke, see Catherine Morrisson,

Proponents of regional representation based their arguments on a combination of historical analysis and contemporary strategy. This included an understanding that the FTA's political godparent, the federal Conservative Party, had adopted a 'divide and conquer' strategy, pitting province against province and region against region to promote the agreement. Regionalism is a profound cleavage in Canada's political history and it was welcomed with open arms into the party's arsenal. Since the late 1970s, the Conservatives had literally abandoned 'nation-building' as an objective. During his brief tenure as prime minister in 1979, Joe Clark elaborated on the concept of Canada as a "community of communities." This perspective reflected the 'province-building' strategy adopted by the resource-rich Western provinces during the 1970s that had run up against the two short-lived attempts by the Trudeau Liberal government to reimplement some semblance of nation-building.[22]

The province-building development strategy was far from a new phenomenon in the Canadian context, having been pioneered by Ontario at the turn of the century and brought to new heights in Québec during the Quiet Revolution (1950s-60s). Now though, the Conservative Party found a rationale for its neo-conservatism in "a discourse of regionalism, provincial rights and decentralization."[23] The Conservatives were consequently more than willing to fan the flames of regionalism by building on Western resentment of one pillar of the Liberal's failed Third National Policy of the early 1980s, the National Energy Program (NEP) and fuelling Québec's opposition to another, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the repatriated Canadian constitution.

The Conservatives' electoral victory in 1984 was, as a result, constructed on an alliance of disgruntled regional constituencies. In their campaign for free trade and re-election in 1988, the Conservatives would attempt to repeat this scenario focusing

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Memorandum to Tony Clarke, Dennis Howlett, and Larry Wagg, 26 September 1987.

[22] Brodie and Jenson, *Crisis, Challenge and Change;* see also Chapter 1 above.

[23] Jane Jenson, "Different but not 'Exceptional': Canada's Permeable Fordism," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 26, no. 1 (1989): 89.

this time on fuelling discontent with the industrial heartland – Ontario – both in the West and in Québec.[24]

For opponents of the FTA, the ability to challenge the Tories tactics with an alternative discourse that recognized regional differences but emphasized common pan-Canadian class and sectoral interests would be a key asset, perhaps even a pre-condition of success. On their own, national organizations based in Ontario and Québec were poorly placed to bring an understanding of the potential regional impact of an FTA to the PCN's process. As a result, they were unlikely to prioritize the integration of regional perspectives into the Network's analysis. A Pro-Canada Network without provincial representation would thus be less likely to be able to effectively confront regional antagonisms where it mattered most, at the provincial level, or gain public legitimacy as 'pan-Canadian.'

The absence of provincial groups around the table had other serious consequences. The political effectiveness of the Network depended on its ability to carry out nation-wide actions that would be difficult, if not impossible, to undertake without a strong regional base. This became evident as plans for a national petition drive were developed. Polling results made available to the PCN by the Council of Canadians indicated strong public opposition to free trade and thus fertile ground for such an initiative.[25] Given its own limited resources, the PCN needed the activist energy of the coalitions to get the legwork done and collect the petition signatures.[26]

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[24] Campbell and Pal, *The Real Worlds of Canadian Politics; Cases in Process and Policy*, 189. Graham Fraser suggests that federal Tory cabinet minister Lucien Bouchard argued publicly that "opposition to free trade was basically a plot by the Ontario establishment to retain its wealth and privileges at the expense of the rest of the country, particularly Québec." In Graham Fraser, *Playing for Keeps: The Making of the Prime Minister, 1988* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989); see also "Peterson Blasts Bouchard's 'Plot' Comment," *Montréal Gazette*, 5 November 1988, 6 and David Johnston, "Free Trade Scares 'les Anglais': Bouchard," *Montréal Gazette*, 16 November 1988, A11. On shifting provincial stances *vis-à-vis* the FTA, see Campbell and Pal, *The Real Worlds of Canadian Politics; Cases in Process and Policy*, 193-95, 200-06.

[25] Angus Reid Associates, "Free Trade: Canadians' Perceptions of the Initiative," August 1987. Other public opinion surveys indicated similar widespread support for an election call before a free trade agreement was signed, see for example "75% Polled Want Free Trade Vote," *Toronto Star*, 3 December 1987, A8.

[26] Howlett, Interview by author. For a glimpse of the state of the Network's resource base at the time, see Ross Howard, "Hard-up Coalition of Opponents Vows to Run 'Massive' Campaign," *Globe and Mail*, 8 October 1987, A5. Co-chair John Trent describes the "daily operations running on hand-to-mouth basis" as well as "plans to rely on low-cost public meetings, media attention and its non-partisan

Some proponents of the inclusion of provincial coalitions also argued that providing a forum for these groups to share experiences and coordinate activities would in itself serve to strengthen the provincial base of the movement. Finally, other participants viewed the presence of provincial activists as a counterweight to the more cautious orientation of the staff and leadership of national organizations already around the table.[27]

Because of these pressures, twenty-five regional representatives were invited to a two-day session October 18-19, 1987 following the Council of Canadians' Annual General Meeting in Ottawa. Representatives of coalitions from Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, Québec, Nova Scotia and Ontario joined officials from the provincial federations of labour of Alberta, Ontario, and New Brunswick. Adding to the mix relatively well-established groups such as the Saskatchewan Coalition for Social Justice, Newfoundland's Coalition for Equality, and others already engaged in cross-sectoral campaigns on the free trade issue like the coalitions from Ontario and Manitoba would fundamentally change the nature of the PCN.[28]

The October meeting was a watershed for the Pro-Canada Network's organizational structure. The expanded format, including two categories of membership for national organizations and provincial coalitions, constituted the prototype for the Network's regular decision-making body. Indeed, the October 1987 meeting was retrospectively considered the group's first General Assembly.[29]

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image when public debates are held."

[27] Interventions at PCN meetings during the summer of 1987, these points are developed in Howlett, "Social Movement Coalitions: New Possibilities for Social Change" and elaborated in Howlett, Interview by author.

[28] Provincial representatives attending included: Jean Swanson (End Legislated Poverty, Vancouver), Don Aitken and Carol Anne Hayes (Alberta Federation of Labour, Alberta), Susan Spratt (Manitoba Coalition Against Free Trade), Ross Sutherland (Coalition Against Free Trade), Grace McInnis (Ontario Federation of Labour), Peter Bakvis (Confederation des Syndicats Nationaux, Québec), John Murphy (New Brunswick Federation of Labour), Tom McIlworth, Reverend Roy deMarsh (Maritime Conference), Maureen Larkin (P.E.I. Coalition Against Free Trade), Paul Burgwin (Halifax-Dartmouth Labour Council). PCN First Assembly Minutes.

The broadening to a provincial base was very similar to the process undertaken by the Working Committee for Social Solidarity. McBane, "Memorandum re. Social Solidarity."

[29] This is simply deduced from the numbering of subsequent assemblies.

The inclusion of new participants raised a number of new issues and opened the door to a substantive consideration of organizational structure. Since June 1987, the Network had functioned with regular general meetings and established four committees that were more or less active – communications, strategy, alternatives and coordination.[30] Larger numbers of representatives – many not based in the Toronto-Montréal-Ottawa triangle where most national organization head offices were located – underlined the need for more careful attention to structure. For example, full membership assemblies were now too unwieldy to be expected to meet very often or on short notice. To compensate, a Steering Committee with a core membership of representatives from key national organizations was created and delegated to follow-up on Assembly decisions. As a general rule, the committee included one representative from each participating sector – women, church, farm, labour, etc. – except where divergent interests or historical reasons made the presence of two organizations from a sector essential, or a lack of interest or resources meant that none were present.[31]

Steering committee membership also included representatives of the Québec and Ontario coalitions. While there was some notion that the presence of these two provincial coalitions would compensate for the absence of others whose attendance could not be financially secured, this was not the primary reason given for their inclusion. The place of the Coalition québecoise on the Steering Committee was principally a pragmatic recognition of the different concerns and the distinct approach the campaign against free trade would take in Québec. For some Network actors whose own organizations had long recognized Québec's right to self-determination – a number of trade unions and NAC for example – it was also a small step towards incorporating a 'two nations' vision of Canada in their political practice.

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[30] PCN First Assembly Minutes.

[31] In the case of the labour movement representatives of two federations – the Canadian Labour Congress and Confederation of Canadian Unions – were included on the Steering Committee. See Chapter 3 above. At different moments seniors organizations and environmental groups would fall into the latter category – i.e., lack of interest or resources. See PCN files.

The inclusion of the Ontario coalition was inevitable and essential. Like the Coalition québecoise, the Coalition against Free Trade (Ontario) was at the very least a peer to the nascent PCN. Based in Toronto, CAFT had developed and in fact nurtured a national profile. Indeed, it was not due to an oversight that the coalition had omitted the prefix Ontario from its name. Coalition members had shied away from this characterization because of their intention to play a national role.[32]

While activists elsewhere in the country tended to view the Toronto group's national aspirations as, yet another example of metropolitan imperialism, a positive rationale for these goals can also be constructed.[33] First, CAFT was among the first anti-free trade groups established in the country and, as such, was filling an important void. Secondly, its base in Canada's largest metropolitan area did make it strategically well placed for the job. Toronto was, for example, also home to the national offices of a number of pan-Canadian popular sector organizations including NAC, GATT-Fly and large industrial unions like the CAW and USWA, all early converts to the anti-free trade cause.[34]

In the final analysis then the presence of the Ontario and Québec groups on the PCN's Steering Committee was not primarily motivated by the need for the voice of regional groups to be heard at this level. Quite to the contrary, the fact that the only provincial groups participating in the steering committee process were representing the large central Canadian provinces came to be seen by activists in other provinces as further reinforcing the dominance of national organizations within the Network. The problem of regional representation in decision-making was clearly not resolved.[35]

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[32] Based on author's interviews with key members of the CAFT including Ken Traynor, Marjorie Cohen, Laurel Ritchie and Mel Watkins.

[33] Several activists expressed this opinion to the author in interviews, including Mary Boyd and Susan Spratt.

[34] CAFT was active as early as March 1986. The "Against Free Trade Revue" at Massey Hall in Toronto attracted an audience of more than 2,000. Speakers at the event included Bishop Remi de Roo, UAW-Canada president Bob White and prominent cultural figures like author Pierre Berton. "High-profile Canadians Plan Anti-free Trade Drive," *Toronto Star*, 22 February 1986 and "Trade Critics Taking Fight to Grassroots," *Globe and Mail*, 26 February 1986, A8.

[35] The Steering Committee also included the chairpersons of the three newly formed 'working committees' established by the October meeting. The three committees – strategy, research and analysis, and media and communications - were to further work on the Network's agenda in their

5. Early Strategy

While negotiations between the Canadian and U.S. governments continued through the summer of 1987, the deadline for the American fast track legislative process loomed large. As the summer ran on, many Canadians came to the conclusion that the FTA would die on the drafting board, a victim, for the most part, of differences between the executive and legislative branches in the United States. Among opponents of the deal, opinions were divided though the obstacles facing the negotiators appeared important. According to Doern and Tomlin, key anti-FTA activists thought the deal would die during the summer.[36] One of them though has a different assessment:

> Virtually everyone, including the opposition parties, seemed convinced the talks would collapse because of U.S. unhappiness with the deal... The coalition groups knew, however, that this was not true. We had good information from Washington to indicate the U.S. negotiators were delighted with the concessions they had gained from Canada...It was clear to us that a deal would be struck.[37]

Records of early Pro-Canada Network meetings in the fall of 1987 indicate that substantial debate and discussion of possible outcomes did take place. It is also clear that three possibilities were considered – a comprehensive agreement, a partial agreement and no agreement – and that, in the end, no consensus opinion emerged.[38]

On 23 September 1987, Canada's chief negotiator Simon Reisman broke off talks with his American counterpart. Reisman's apparent gambit set the stage for the last minute deal reached on the October weekend of the fast track deadline in Washington after two days of resumed talks. A deal was reached on Saturday 3 October and both the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) and the Canadian Trade Negotiations Office (TNO) released preliminary details by the next day.

While the process of drafting a legal text for the agreement would drag on until mid-December, the preliminary deal dramatically raised the stakes for the Pro-

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respective areas between meetings of the Assembly.

[36] Doern and Tomlin, *Faith and Fear: The Free Trade Story*, 214.

[37] Cohen, "The Anatomy of the Decision: The Efforts of Coalitions," 24.

[38] PCN First Assembly Minutes.

Canada Network.[39] Against this background, member groups set three strategic goals at their first Assembly less than two weeks following what became known as the 'Washington Surprise.' First, all efforts were to be focused on the call for an election prior to implementation of the FTA. Second, pressure on the government was to be achieved by mobilizing public opposition to the trade deal and, third, provincial governments would be pushed to reject, or following its adoption, to refuse to implement the agreement.[40]

The Assembly also identified tools to attain these objectives. These included lobbying (defined broadly to include petitions and other pressure tactics as well as face-to-face meetings) of both federal and provincial parties – including governments at the provincial level – and popular education and media work. Finally, much emphasis was placed on the role of a Research and Analysis Team that would undertake a "detailed analysis of the final text of the free trade accord immediately after it is available."[41]

First conceived of as a more limited technical sub-committee, the research group convened by University of Ottawa political economist Duncan Cameron marked an important expansion of the scope of the PCN's activities.[42] The academics and researchers from different sectors and organizations produced a quick but substantive critique of the preliminary legal text of the FTA in December 1987 that

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[39] On immediate reactions to the 3 October deal, see Campbell and Pal, *The Real Worlds of Canadian Politics; Cases in Process and Policy*, 210.

[40] *Free Trade Action Dossier* 1987, 5-8; PCN First Assembly Minutes; PCN, "Strategy Chart," October 1987.

[41] PCN, "Strategy Chart." In addition the PCN's plans included: analysis of legal text, meetings with provincial premiers and party leaders to press for provincial rejection and non-implementation, push for signatures on petition calling for election, meetings by constituents with as many MP's as possible, participation in hearings and press in provinces. In "Coalitions Meet to Plan Action Strategy," *Free Trade Action Dossier*, 23 October 1987.

On lobbying provincial governments, see "Provincial Laws Can Challenge Trade Deal," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 27 June 1988; on actions taken by provincial governments, see, for example, William Walker, "Peterson Challenges Free Trade Deal with New Health Bill," *Toronto Star*, 3 June 1988, A1; on the introduction of legislation to protect Ontario's hydroelectric power and wine industry, see William Walker, "Peterson Escalates War against Free Trade," *Toronto Star*, 28 June 1988, A1; on Manitoba's introduction of legislation to protect land from US ownership, see Geoffrey York, "Manitoba Takes Aim at Free Trade Pact," *Globe and Mail*, 12 February 1988, A5.

[42] PCN First Assembly Minutes.

was immediately distributed to groups across the country. This process was repeated in May 1988 after the implementing legislation for the FTA (Bill C-130) was tabled in the House of Commons.[43]

Until this point, the Pro-Canada Network had operated principally as an information clearinghouse. Following the model of the Canada Summit, sectoral and provincial groups brought their concerns, respective analyses and strategic priorities to assemblies. These forums were important opportunities for groups from different sectors to share perspectives and to improve and formalize communication channels between them. The formation of the research team opened up new opportunities. It provided an entry point for sympathetic academics and others with relevant expertise but who were not necessarily affiliated to member organizations, to contribute to the Network's activities. The team also became a space for sharing and integrating perspectives on different facets of the FTA, a process of collective analysis that went a step beyond what the simple summit model could facilitate. Both of the research team's early interventions, responding to the preliminary legal text and the implementing legislation (C-130), were instrumental in building the Network's external credibility. Particularly at this early stage in both the free trade debate and the PCN's own development, the ability to produce substantive critiques of policy proposals helped to establish the Network is legitimacy with politicians and with the media.[44]

Under the aegis of its Media and Communications Committee, the PCN developed a communications strategy reflecting both its objectives – blocking negotiation and implementation of the FTA – and its limited resources. From the outset, the committee identified the enormous potential for external communication at low-cost to the Network through member organizations to their own constituencies.

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[43] "Analysis Team to Review Legal Text," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 26 November 1987; "PCN Analysis of Final Text," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 18 December 1987; "Briefing Notes on FTA Implementing Legislation (C-130) from the PCN Analysis Team," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 1 June 1988.

[44] This conclusion is based on a review of media coverage of the Network as well as interviews with various participants in the work of the PCN's Research and Analysis Committee as well as other key Network actors.

Even if only a fraction of the millions of Canadians these groups claimed to represent could be reached, this internal distribution and cross-fertilization of information could be extremely significant. Before the Canada Summit a number of groups had already undertaken substantial internal education campaigns on free trade.[45] With the formation of the Network and increasing cooperation, materials developed for this purpose were now shared between organizations. For example, CUPE produced 40,000 copies of a special issue of its regular publication *The Facts* covering all aspects of the case against free trade in an accessible format. Likewise, groups from NAC to the United Church, and from the Canadian Environmental Network to the CAW had produced a wealth of information in a variety of formats and these were widely shared with other member groups. New materials produced by member groups tended to include reference to the PCN and to emphasize the broadly based nature of opposition to the FTA.[46]

The committee was also responsible for developing a media strategy. Again, because of limited resources the emphasis was largely on 'earned media.' The committee's work ranged from preparing news releases and information kits for the media and placing analysis pieces in daily papers to lobbying, cajoling and pressuring journalists to cover particular topics. A bank of resource people with expertise on specific aspects of the trade deal was made available to member groups and the media alike.[47]

But opponents were hamstrung in their relationship with the media. First, they generally lacked the resources necessary to satisfy the expectations of the mainstream media. Moreover, the media was not overly sympathetic to the message in the

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[45] Others include the Canadian Teachers' Federation, the National Farmers Union and organizations representing the cultural sector. See Chapter 3 above for other examples.

[46] In May 1987, GATT-Fly launched the *Free Trade Action Dossier* as a means of ensuring communication between PCN member groups as well as more broadly publicizing the Network's analysis and activities. The Dossier, which was later renamed the *Pro-Canada Dossier* and then transferred to the Network's Ottawa office after the 1988 election, played an important role in maintaining the flow of information and became a key component in the media and communication committee's work. Howlett, "Social Movement Coalitions: New Possibilities for Social Change" and Howlett, Interview by author.

[47] Based on a report by the co-chair of the media and communications committee. Howlett, "Social Movement Coalitions: New Possibilities for Social Change."

discourse of popular sector groups and was far more open to the neo-conservative logic put forward by business and articulated around concepts such as 'competitiveness.'[48] Second, the Network considered its diverse membership reflecting the broad nature of opposition to the deal an important 'selling point' for its message though this was not easily related to the media. Thus PCN news conferences and other public events featuring several representatives tended to overwhelm journalists accustomed to dealing with one leader or spokesperson at a time.[49]

Finally, the PCN also lobbied politicians directly. At the federal level, this meant maintaining a steady flow of information to the two opposition parties. The Network had strong, if very different, relationships with both parties. The connection with the NDP was a result, first, of the CLC's central role in that party and, second, of the political preferences of most member groups and their activists. The PCN's relationship with the Liberal Party was less structured but no less important, notably during the first phase of anti-FTA mobilization. The link between anti-free traders and the party was largely dependent on the Council of Canadians and its two most prominent figures, Maude Barlow and Mel Hurtig. The extent of the Liberal connections Barlow and Hurtig brought with them is detailed in both of their autobiographies and reflected in the number of prominent Liberals who participated in Council events from 1985 to 1992. As a result, PCN researchers and others had regular access to Liberal party decision-makers – including providing briefings for the parliamentary caucus and party strategists.[50]

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[48] This argument is developed in Frances Russell, "Mass Media Shut Out Opponents of Free Trade," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 8 April 1989 and James P. Winters, ed., *The Silent Revolution: Media, Democracy, and the Free Trade Debate* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1990). See also James Winters, *Common Cents: Media Portrayal of the Gulf War and Other Events* (Montréal and New York: Black Rose Books, 1992).

[49] In June 1988, the PCN had identified a team of four spokespersons: CLC vice-president Nancy Riche, Council of Canadians chair Mel Hurtig, NAC vice-president Marjorie Cohen and, on a rotating basis, a representative of one of the four unions that made up the Coalition québecoise, reflecting the geographic scope and sectoral diversity of the Network. See also Howlett, "Social Movement Coalitions: New Possibilities for Social Change"; Cohen, Interview by author; Clarke et al., *Absent Mandate: Interpreting Change in Canadian Elections;* Bleyer, "Coalitions of Social Movements as Agencies for Social Change: the Action Canada Network."

[50] See Maude Barlow, *The Fight of My Life: Confessions of an Unrepentant Canadian* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1998) and Hurtig, *At Twilight in the Country, Memoirs of a Canadian Nationalist.* Ayres quotes Liberal MP Lloyd Axworthy's favourable assessment of the PCN's usefulness both in

6. The Action Agenda

Meeting in the aftermath of the 2 January signing of the FTA, delegates to the PCN's Second Assembly (16-19 January 1988) made a collective commitment to coordinate joint action strategies, move beyond research and analysis, and prioritize information sharing and political education work. In a press release at the close of the Assembly a six-point action plan was laid out.[51]

All the PCN's research and communications work was undertaken with one goal in mind: raising the profile of the free trade issue and increasing opposition to the deal in order to force the Conservative government to call an election prior to implementation.[52] The Network's Strategy Committee, chaired by Julie Davis, then vice-president and later secretary-treasurer of the OFL, was responsible for developing the action plan to fulfill this objective. Actions such as the countrywide petition started at the end of 1987, as well as others taken on at the provincial level, were often not initiated by the Network *per se*. Rather they began as projects of individual national organizations – in the case of the petition, the Council of

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providing a critique of the FTA and as "leverage against other members of the caucus – that it [the PCN] might turn on us if we didn't use their information and listen to what they had to say." In Ayres, *Defying Conventional Wisdom: Political Movements and Popular Contention against North American Free Trade*, 84.

Meanwhile PCN member coalitions were pressuring provincial government's to oppose the federal free trade project. In a number of cases, anti-free trade groups also took their arguments to the municipal level asking local and regional councils to pass motions opposing the FTA. See, for example, "Toronto City Council Opposes FTA," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 13 September 1987.

[51] The campaign strategy included: "1) the mass distribution of two publications which provide detailed analysis of why the Mulroney deal is a bad deal for Canada; 2) an intensive grass roots education program within all our organizations; 3) a series of lobby actions and/or public demonstrations designed to challenge the enabling legislation when it is put forward in Parliament this spring; 4) A series of cultural and political events in various communities across Canada involving artists, entertainers and public personalities from every part of this country; 5) a means for people to send a clear protest message to the Mulroney government on this issue through their 1988 tax returns; 6) a national action day." In "Pro-Canada Action Strategy Announced," *Free Trade Action Dossier*, 29 January 1988; see also PCN Assembly, News Release, Ottawa, 19 January 1988.

In a memorandum to the OFL's executive officers, Riel Miller who had represented the federation at the PCN meeting notes the success of the Assembly, highlights the theme chosen for the campaign - It's a bad deal for Canada – and records that the two main actions agreed to were a National Day of Action for June and a petition drive calling for an election to culminate on April 17. Riel Miller, Memorandum to OFL Executive Officers 1988.

[52] By January 1988, free trade had moved from relative obscurity to become "the issue most requiring attention from the country's leaders" according to 37% of Canadians. *The Reid Report*, May 1993, 2.

Canadians – or provincial coalitions that eventually drew support, participation and at times some degree of ownership from other member groups.[53]

The 12 June National Day of Action was the Network's first attempt at countrywide coordinated activities. Organized around the theme 'Let Canadians decide', most events – including a number of symbolic actions along the Canada-U.S. border and cultural events – were small in scale but nonetheless raised the profile of the issue as well as opponents' concerns.[54]

The Network continued to pay close attention to the political parties during the spring and summer of 1988, pressing provincial governments to refuse to implement a free trade agreement. While provincial coalitions took the lead on this front, the Network provided a forum for the coordination of their activities.[55] As part of efforts to hold the leaders of the federal opposition parties to their public commitment to fight the deal, the PCN brought together an unprecedented number and range of popular sector leaders to meet with, in turn, Liberal leader John Turner and NDP leader Ed Broadbent on 30 May 1988. Observers at the daylong lobby event are convinced that the passion and commitment expressed by representatives of so many different sectors of Canadian society played a key role in steeling the party leaders' resolve to oppose the FTA. It is interesting to note that despite an impressive list of participants the meetings with the opposition leaders drew virtually no media coverage.[56]

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[53] PCN First Assembly Minutes. The petition effort started in 1987, forms were circulated far and wide and many signatures were collected. Unfortunately the energy behind this action seems to have dissipated and it was not used to full effect; April 9, 1988 became 'Sign up for Canada Day' across Ontario, with several thousand volunteers in 35 cities and towns asking people to sign the PCN petition. "Ontario Signs Up for Canada," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 29 April 1988.

[54] Reports on June 12 events are in Fourth Assembly Minutes. See also "June 12th - Canadians Across the Country Show Opposition to Trade Deal," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 27 June 1988; and "Thousands Demand Free Trade Vote," *Toronto Star*, 13 June 1988, A1.

[55] "Letters, Meetings with Provincial Premiers Urged," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 1 June 1988; "Provincial Action Needed to Challenge Trade Deal," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 27 June 1988.

[56] The lobby is described in "PCN Leaders Present Petitions to Opposition Leaders," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 1 June 1988. Opinions of the impact of the lobby were garnered from personal interviews with several participants.

A third arena of political struggle emerged when Liberal leader John Turner called on the Liberal majority in the Senate to block passage of the implementing legislation (C-130) passed by the Conservative majority in the Commons. While the Network eventually agreed to support the Liberal Leader and Senators in this endeavour, the issue raised the spectre of internal partisan differences. The NDP had long argued for the abolition of the Senate and leader Ed Broadbent used this party policy as justification for publicly condemning the Liberal strategy.[57] While the labour movement's leadership was initially reluctant to disagree with the NDP's position they eventually joined the consensus within the Network in mobilizing support for the Senators' position. In justifying its support for the Liberal strategy, the Network emphasized the role the Senators' stance might play in obtaining an election:

> [I]t will also be important to mobilize support for the moves taken by Turner. The issue of the Senate is a contentious one. But the real question – and the one that must be put front and centre – is one of democracy: will the Canadian people have the opportunity to determine the fate of their country in an election or will the FTA be foisted on us by a government that has no mandate from the people for such a radical change in direction?[58]

7. Facing Electoral Politics

The 1988 federal election campaign was the Network's baptism by fire. On 1 October 1988 Prime Minister Mulroney kicked off a federal election campaign. The fact that an election was being held before implementation of the FTA could of course itself be considered a major victory for the PCN. In the process of achieving this goal the Network had rubbed shoulders with the traditional political sphere. Now, the realities of electoral politics created a new dynamic for a coalition of labour and

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[57] Constitutionally the Liberal Senators were well within their rights, but the Conservative Government hoped to exploit the unseemly public image of an unelected institution blocking the decision of an elected majority in the House of Commons. The NDP's position could only help to convey this impression. In the end the Conservative plan was undermined by the fundamentally democratic demand the Liberal Party through its Senators was supporting: for an election before implementation. Joel Rhimy, "Liberal Move Blow to NDP, Poll Indicates," *Toronto Star*, 30 July 1988; and Martin Cohn, "Call Election or Trade Bill will be Stalled, Turner Warned," *Toronto Star*, 21 July 1988.

[58] In "Senate Delay Makes Election Likely," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 1 July 1988. At a PCN press conference on July 21, Mel Hurtig applauded John Turner's move to use the Senate to force an election on the trade deal: "Ever since this deal was first agreed to in October 1987, the Mulroney government has tried to obstruct the established democratic tradition of open discussion of the implications of this deal. They must not be allowed to succeed." "PCN Condemns Legislative Committee's Refusal to Hold Cross-Country Hearings on Bill C-130," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 29 July 1988.

community groups.[59] First, the onset of a campaign unleashed the resource-rich organizational machinery of the major political parties. Consequently, the focus of the media's attention inevitably shifted onto these political actors. Second, the start of the partisan battle for electoral victory would likely accentuate internal political differences within the Network.

The central role of political parties in an electoral period was recognized within the Network, as the following excerpt from an article in the *Pro-Canada Dossier* indicates:

> Like it or not, we must rely on the leaders and candidates of the opposition parties to educate Canadians on the free trade issue. How the opposition parties decide to cut the issue will be critical to how people vote...
>
> While in an election campaign most of the media attention will be focused on the leaders and candidates, the PCN and its member organizations will have an important complementary role to play.[60]

The impact of the intense partisanship associated with an electoral campaign on the coalition process was muted by two factors. First, the experience of developing a common perspective and strategy over the period since April 1987 had created an unprecedented degree of trust between participants across partisan lines. Second and furthermore, the need to maintain pressure for an election call on the Mulroney government until the very last moment focused the energies of all trade deal opponents on this common goal.

At the Fourth Assembly (19-20 June 1988), member groups discussed an election strategy document produced by the Steering Committee.[61] It divided short-term preparatory tasks into two areas of concern: organizational preparation and action initiatives. The first category included developing closer ties with the two opposition parties – more specifically their respective election planning committees – and requesting that each designate a PCN contact person for the duration of the

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[59] The Report of the PCN's Sixth Assembly (December 1988) includes notes on a post-election meeting with representatives of the two opposition parties. Tensions between the coalition groups and the party representatives are reflected in this document. Summary of Discussion and Decisions, PCN, Sixth Assembly, Ottawa, 4-6 December 1988.

[60] "Action," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 13 September 1988.

[61] Pro-Canada Network, "Election Strategy," 19-20 June 1988.

campaign. The document also called for member organizations to assign representatives to work closely with the Network during this period and emphasized the need for groups to highlight the FTA in the election literature they produced for their own constituencies. As for action initiatives, the Steering Committee listed the production of a pan-Canadian flyer, a questionnaire for all candidates, lobbying for a national television debate on free trade, and the targeting of key ridings for concerted public action.[62]

Over the course of the summer of 1988, an election strategy was built around these ideas. The three key goals set out reflected the importance accorded to the electoral dynamic: providing support to parties and candidates opposed to free trade, focusing media and public attention on the deal, and mobilizing the constituencies of member groups at the local level. The components of the plan proposed to the PCN's Fifth Assembly (Montréal, August 1988) were built around these goals, they included: candidate briefings and resource people, election kits, visible protest activities, cartoon booklet, TV debate, constituency mobilization, and target ridings.[63]

Support for the opposition parties and their candidates was offered in the form of briefings and information kits and relationships were reinforced through meetings between members of the PCN's Research and Analysis Team and officials of the two parties. In August, Network representatives proposed to provide the opposition parties' candidates with briefings from resource people across the country on the impact of an FTA on specific sectors and regions. The Network also developed information kits and made these available to the close to six hundred Liberal and NDP candidates standing for election.[64]

At the outset of the campaign, the Conservative government was reticent to make free trade the central issue.[65] Indeed as Clarke et al. point out:

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[62] Fourth Assembly Minutes.

[63] Ibid.

[64] While the Liberals enthusiastically accepted kits for all their candidates, the NDP insisted that it needed only twelve – one for each province and territory.

[65] "Action," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 13 September 1988. The longer-term Tory strategy is laid out in a

> The only reason free trade became the paramount issue in 1988 was because of the delays in negotiating the Agreement and passing the enabling legislation; Conservative party officials had expected the agreement to be in place long before they would be called to account.[66]

While neither one of the opposition parties initially dwelt on the issue either, Liberal leader John Turner soon embarked on a passionate crusade against the FTA while the NDP, which had been highly critical of a bilateral trade agreement as early as 1985, soft pedaled its position on the issue.[67] The NDP's strategy was based on opinion polling establishing leader Ed Broadbent as the party's number one asset and showing the party to lack credibility on "economic issues." Party strategists were also concerned that vocal opposition to the FTA would inevitably feed Liberal Party support. For all these reasons, free trade fell down the NDP's campaign priority list.[68]

The Liberal Party's stand benefited from the palpable passion of its leader on this issue. The party's credibility was also enhanced by the Liberal Senators' action that had ensured an election prior to a decision on the FTA. But the Liberals, and their leader in particular, were hampered by serious internal dissension and, in the long run, their essentially superficial position on the trade deal. Turner's emotional clarion call played well in the televised leadership debate – "I happen to believe, sir, that you have sold us out" – but lost some of its potency in the home stretch of the campaign. The Turner-Liberal defence of sovereignty was largely a defence of the *status quo* and, as such, did not effectively deal with free trade proponents' chosen theme of

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confidential memorandum from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) entitled "Communications Strategy for Canada-US Bilateral Trade Initiative," reprinted in Cameron, ed., *The Free Trade Papers*.

[66] Clarke et al., *Absent Mandate: Interpreting Change in Canadian Elections*, 73.

[67] Ibid., 3-7. By 1986 materials produced by NDP Members of Parliament regularly highlighted the free trade issue. For example, proposed legislation to extend prescription drug patents were opposed as the thin edge of the free trade wedge. See, for example, Cyril Keeper, M.P., "Householder," (Winnipeg, Manitoba: 1986), 11-12.

[68] Clarke et al., *Absent Mandate: Interpreting Change in Canadian Elections*, 7; see also the PCN's own analysis of the electoral dynamics as expounded in "Action," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 13 September 1988. For example: "Broadbent has to stop campaigning like he would be satisfied with being Leader of the Opposition and start campaigning to save Canada. He needs to focus his fire on the Tories and the trade deal and less on the Liberals." And, on the Liberals: "The Liberals will have to get their organization together and hold off on the infighting until after the election is over. Turner needs to continue to throw his prepared speeches away and speak from the heart and hit hard at the trade deal. When he has done so, he has come across well."

"managing change."[69] As a result, both leader and party were vulnerable to the Conservative counterattack when it came.

With two of the three major parties reluctant to focus on free trade, and a third often limiting the scope of its critique, the PCN decided to make the push for a televised leaders debate on free trade a top priority. While overtures to the national broadcasters were all rebuffed, the PCN played a role in making the general televised leaders event a *de facto* debate on free trade. Information, tips and suggestions were passed on to those responsible for the briefing of both opposition leaders.[70] In the end, the defining moment of the debate was the confrontation on the trade deal between Mulroney and Turner.

To publicize facets of the impact of a trade deal, the Network and its member groups organized a series of news conferences and public events. For example, to highlight the threat to Medicare and social programs, former Liberal health minister Monique Begin and the head of the National Federation of Nurses' Unions Kathleen Connors were brought together to make the case against the deal to the media. Similarly, environmental groups held news conferences during the second week of the campaign to raise the threat to Canada's water resources implicit in the FTA.[71]

The Network's role as a forum for information sharing was also put to the test. Internally, this involved assisting member groups with co-ordination and publicity for their own actions with the objective of eliminating duplication and increasing

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[69] Richard Johnston, *Letting the People Decide: Dynamics of a Canadian Election* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press: 1992), 10-15; Clarke et al., *Absent Mandate: Interpreting Change in Canadian Elections*, 3.

[70] Ken Traynor, Interview by author, Toronto, 3 March 1992; Clarke, Interview by author.

[71] "The most successful of these challenges (to supporters of the FTA) was the one dealing with social programmes. Close to 30% of supporters of free trade admitted that this argument made them less supportive of the agreement." André Blais, "Public Opinion on Free Trade in the 1988 Election Campaign," in *The Free Trade Agreement of 1988: Implications for the Future of Canadian-American Relations*, ed. Jane Jenson (Boston: Harvard University, Centre for International Affairs, 1989), 13.

On the health care and environment interventions, see "Environmentalists Target Free Trade," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 27 October 1988 and Joyce Nelson, *The Sultans of Sleaze* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989), 90. For media coverage of the environmental groups intervention, see, for example: "Le libre-échange: un beau gachis, pour les ecolos," *Le Devoir*, 23 September 1988, 1; "Free Trade Deal Called Disaster for Environment," *Ottawa Citizen* 1988, A4; "Environmental Groups Fear Free-Trade Deal Disaster for Canada," *Globe and Mail*, 23 September 1988, A5.

effectiveness in the process. Externally, the anti-free trade message was carried forward in a variety of ways. Beyond public events and the distribution of literature – pamphlets, broadsheets, fact sheets – by member groups, the highlight was without a doubt the distribution of over two million copies of a cartoon booklet entitled *What's the Big Deal?*

The cartoon booklet project, culminating with its insertion in daily newspapers during the second week of the election campaign, had been carried through for the Network by the CAFT (Ontario) and its two staffers. It was a major endeavour – from raising close to three-quarters of a million dollars to all the creative and logistical problems of large-scale production and distribution. The end result was widely considered to be impressive: twenty-four pages of text and colour illustrations dreamed up by author, playwright and CAFT activist Rick Salutin and perhaps Canada's foremost political cartoonist Terry Mosher (pen name Aislin).

The booklet's reported effectiveness made it even more notable. Christopher Waddell wrote in *The Globe and Mail* that the "widely circulated pamphlet against the agreement by the Pro-Canada Network has had a major impact on voter impressions of the deal."[72] A slew of editorial comment and interest from print columnists over the coming days reinforced the impact.[73] Grudging admiration came from pro-FTA consulting firm Informetrica when it compared the booklet to the government's own propaganda:

> the free trade booklets produced by the government were found to require second- to fourth year university reading skills. This contrasts with the trashy little comic book-like pamphlet, 'What's the Big Deal,' produced by the anti-Free Trade Pro-Canada Network which can be understood by people with a grade 7 or 8 reading level. The alarming result is that this is one of the few 'information' pieces on free trade that is accessible and understandable to eight out of ten voters.'[74]

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[72] Christopher Waddell, "Pamphlet Attacking Free Trade Shakes Up Voters," *The Globe and Mail*, 26 October 1988, A11; see also "Free Trade Foes Fight with Humour: Satirical Booklet Slams Tory Types with Cartoons," *Winnipeg Sun*, 12 October 1988, 3 and Alison Bray, "Free Trade Opponents Make Bestseller List with Anti-Pact Booklet," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 13 October 1988, 5.

[73] For examples of each, see "Pamphlet mensonger," *La Presse*, 13 October 1988, B2 and William Watson, "What's the Big Deal? Telling the Truth is," *Financial Post*, 21 October 1988, 13.

[74] Informetrica, *Free Trade File*, 31 October 1988.

Candidates on all sides noted the booklet's impact. Conservatives produced literature to refute its claims while many Liberals and New Democrats requested bulk orders for use in their constituencies.[75] Even cartoonist Mosher was impressed. He recalls one of his encounters with the booklet's effectiveness:

> One night in The Gazette lobby, a staffer yelled, "You s.o.b! You could stop the Deal with that god-damned silly little book of yours!"
>
> "Do you really think so?" I asked, genuinely heartened.[76]

By November, opinion polling indicated that anywhere from 70 to 82 percent of Canadians viewed the FTA as the most important issue facing the country.[77] Moreover, opposition to the agreement stood at 42 percent at the time of the election call and peaked at 50 percent by early November.[78]

The third component of the Network's work during the campaign was to encourage and, where possible, coordinate action. At the most basic level this involved trying to break through the shroud of secrecy surrounding Tory campaign events in order to facilitate protests. The Network's staff tried to keep local activists across the country informed of the travel plans of leading members of the government, particularly the prime minister, to assist them in planning demonstrations. A few unexpected and dramatic confrontations between Mulroney and anti-FTA activists resulted including, in Saskatchewan, where the prime minister's campaign bus was led into town from the airport by a car flying the 'Stars and Stripes' overhead.[79]

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[75] Christopher Waddell, "Pamphlet Attacking Free Trade Shakes Up Voters," *The Globe and Mail*, 26 October 1988, A11; Traynor, Interview by author; Nelson, *The Sultans of Sleaze*, 81. On the response to the booklet, see Rick Salutin, *Waiting for Democracy: A Citizen's Journal* (Toronto: Viking, 1989), 74-76; see also "Mazankowski Dismisses Booklet: Mistruths, Falsehoods," *Winnipeg Sun*, 12 October 1988, 3.

[76] Terry Mosher, *Drawing Bones* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1991), 24.

[77] *The Reid Report*, May 1993, 2; Alan Frizzell, Jon H. Pammett, and Anthony Westell, eds., *The Canadian General Election of 1988* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989), 123.

[78] Gallup opinion polling reported in Clarke et al., *Absent Mandate: Interpreting Change in Canadian Elections*, 80.

[79] David Durning, Interview by author, Toronto, 26 January 1992.

7.1 Partisan Politics and Strategic Voting

Two more elements of the PCN strategy – targeting specific ridings and mobilizing constituencies – were very clearly intertwined with electoral politics. In fact, these two ingredients in the campaign plan remained largely unfocused and encountered a limited degree of success that varied from region to region. This was for a number of reasons. First, the Network and its member groups had only limited access to the resources necessary to mobilize successfully at the riding level. The information necessary for sophisticated targeting of key ridings was only infrequently available given the hesitancy of both opposition parties to part with 'sensitive' information. In any case, the only sector with the campaign machinery necessary to fulfill these tasks – the labour movement – had undertaken the most substantial commitment of resources to the NDP's electoral campaign in its history.[80]

Both tactics – 'mobilizing constituencies' and targeting specific ridings – opened the door to the consideration of strategic or tactical voting, an issue that crystallizes the dilemma faced as movements encounter elections. Opponents of the FTA faced a predicament since the platforms of both the major opposition parties included planks opposing the FTA. Attitudes on this question varied among Network member organizations. For the labour movement, personal, ideological and structural ties to the NDP largely precluded any option other than fulsome support for that party. Because other groups were, for the most part, committed to some form of non-partisanship, the notion of supporting candidates opposed to the FTA from either opposition party was potentially more palatable, though for many it remained a departure from past practice.[81]

Support for a national tactical voting plan came, among others, from leading members of the Council of Canadians. Founder Mel Hurtig, in particular, was convinced that such a plan was necessary to defeat the Conservative government and block the FTA. From his Edmonton office, and from hotel rooms across the country

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[80] Confirmed by CLC Political Action Coordinator Pat Kerwin in an intervention at the PCN's Sixth Assembly. Reported in PCN Sixth Assembly Summary.

[81] On labour's relationship with the NDP, see Chapter 3 above.

as he traveled tirelessly speaking out against the deal, Hurtig continually lobbied the leadership of other member groups over phone and fax to get their backing for a tactical voting plan.[82]

PCN chair Tony Clarke confirmed the growing support for tactical voting at a certain point in the campaign in a memo dated 8 November:

> During the first three weeks of the campaign, however, when the polls were showing a massive Tory majority, attention was given to several additional strategy options that might be necessary, including strategic voting.[83]

In the same communication though, Clarke also noted that shifts in opinion surveys following the leaders debate had finally closed the door on this option. Indeed, polls following the debate showed a surge in support for the Liberals and John Turner holding out the possibility of a victory and calming the sense of urgency that was driving the proponents of tactical voting.[84] Clarke had previously drawn the ire of some PCN groups by appearing to openly support tactical voting. He was quoted in one article as "encouraging Canadians to treat this election unlike any other election and to exercise their vote in the most effective way possible to kill the trade pact." It continued:

> In other words the Network is asking opponents of free trade to vote strategically – to cast aside party preference, hold their noses if necessary, and vote for the opposition candidate most likely to defeat the Tory in their riding...
>
> ...the group recognizes that many voters aren't well enough informed to figure out which opposition candidate is most likely to succeed in their riding.
>
> Thus, Clarke says, the network is seriously considering whether it should advise voters to back specific opposition candidates in specific ridings. No decision will be made until the network has analyzed poll results following last week's pivotal televised leaders' debates.[85]

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[82] Clarke, Interview by author; Mel Hurtig, Memorandum, 24 October 1988.

[83] Tony Clarke, "Election Campaign Activities," Pro-Canada Network, Ottawa, 8 November 1988. For other signs of support for tactical voting, see James Laxer, "This Time Out it's Who Wins, Not How You play The Game," *Globe and Mail*, 20 October 1988, A7 and Bob Ages et al., "An Open Letter to John Turner and Ed Broadbent: United Front Needed to Defeat Free Trade," *Canadian Dimension*, October 1988.

[84] Before the leaders' debates the general trend was 40% in favour, 40% against, and 20% undecided or refusing to answer. Two to three days after the debates a significant gap emerged. Cumulative results for the ten days following the debates showed only 32% in favour, 47% opposed and 22% still with no opinion. Blais, "Public Opinion on Free Trade in the 1988 Election Campaign," 11.

[85] Joan Bryden, "Voting against Free Trade: Expert Warns Strategic Voting Can Be Risky," *Ottawa*

While the impact of the televised leader's debate had put an end to speculation around tactical voting at the national level, the degree of controversy associated with the notion of casting ballots to defeat specific targeted candidates varied from region to region.[86] The number of three-way electoral contests in Ontario made tactical voting both seemingly essential and incredibly complex. But in British Columbia and Saskatchewan the situation was very different. In these two Western provinces, the Liberal Party had been through a long electoral dry spell and held few real hopes of victory. Other than isolated exceptions – for example, Liberal leader John Turner in Vancouver Quadra – the best hopes for FTA opponents lay with NDP candidates who consequently reaped the bulk of the benefit from their activities.

Because most of the provincial coalitions affiliated to the PCN relied on trade unions for a large proportion of their resources – both material and human – the level of crossover between anti-deal and NDP campaigning was sometimes extremely high. In both Alberta and Saskatchewan, provincial coalition coordinators simultaneously served as campaign organizers for NDP candidates.[87] There and in British Columbia, coalition efforts threatened to fold into the labour movement's activities in support of the NDP. Not surprisingly, the character of local NDP campaigns in these provinces was strongly coloured by the efforts of anti-deal activists and the themes they promoted. Whereas NDP candidates in central and eastern Canada were more likely to adopt the party leadership's soft-touch approach to the campaign, Western candidates carried the flag of opposition to the deal.[88]

Citizen, 31 October 1988, A1.

[86] A last minute call for tactical voting did emerge in the final days of the campaign as the Tories recovery in the polls became clearer. Here again Mel Hurtig was a prominent proponent. Clarke, Interview by author; Hurtig, . Hurtig also promoted the idea of a referendum on the trade agreement when a Tory victory was a likely outcome of the election. For example, as the results were being tabulated he argued: "if the Conservatives win a majority tonight it will probably be a small majority. In any event, we must immediately (beginning tonight) call for a referendum. If the argument is made that the election was a referendum, then the answer is clear: most Canadians (likely three of every five voters) voted against the Conservatives and hence against the agreement." Mel Hurtig, Memorandum, 21 November 1988.

[87] Lucien Royer, Interview by author, Edmonton, 13 December 1991; Durning, Interview by author.

[88] B.C. NDP MP Nelson Riis made this point during a meeting following the PCN's post-election assembly in December 1988. PCN Sixth Assembly Summary. There were exceptions to this rule with some candidates in Central and Eastern Canada also highlighting their opposition to the FTA whether for ideological or pragmatic reasons. These included veteran incumbent MP's like Michael Cassidy in

Discussions around 'tactical voting' were less easily resolved in other regions. In the Atlantic provinces, where the NDP had historically had a minimal presence, proposals to promote anti-Tory voting posed a threat to the labour movement-NDP linkage and, as one activist put it, "stirred the pot of controversy."[89]

8. Conclusion

Over a period of eighteen months, the Pro-Canada Network went from its formation to extensive participation in a federal election fought almost exclusively on its priority issue. Within this relatively short timeframe the Network expanded and consolidated its membership and, with the addition of provincial coalitions, tied its national table directly to a grassroots activist base. The PCN and its member groups campaigned for an election on free trade and then launched what was probably the largest non-party intervention in a Canadian federal election with the single exception of the massive corporate pro-free trade lobby that would be initiated in response.

Limited at first to a summit-style information sharing mechanism overlaid on a web of *ad hoc* interpersonal and interorganizational relationships, the Network soon facilitated collective analysis by the different participating sectors. The PCN developed a communications strategy – tailored to its limited means, non-traditional assets, and the opportunities posed by the political balance of forces – and engaged in collective action.

Once the electoral process was engaged, the Network navigated the choppy waters of partisanship, both in terms of the varying commitments and expectations of its member groups and its relationships with the opposition parties. The question that

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Ottawa Centre and Dan Heap in Trinity-Spadina (Toronto). Bruce Tate, Interview by author, Ottawa, 15 March 1992.

[89] Author's interview with PEI-PCN representative Mary Boyd. For the argument that Newfoundlanders and many other Atlantic Canadians were in any case habitual tactical voters, see Joan Marie Sullivan, "Newfoundland Returns to Tradition," *This Magazine*, February 1989.

remains to be answered is whether the 1988 federal election would be the last dramatic act in the PCN's story or truly its baptism by fire.

Chapter 5

Beyond Free Trade

1. Introduction

As the ballots were tallied on 24 November 1988 it became apparent that Canada's first-past-the-post electoral system had delivered another majority government to the Progressive Conservative Party. Despite gaining only 43 percent of the popular vote, the FTA's backers emerged with 169 seats – an absolute majority in the 295-seat House of Commons. The election and its results were a logical endpoint for the Pro-Canada Network. Formed to oppose the FTA but more specifically to demand that a federal election determine the fate of such a fundamental policy initiative, the Network had exhausted its initial mandate.

In this chapter we resume our account by focusing on a critical moment in the Pro-Canada Network's development. At the Sixth Assembly held in Ottawa (3-5 December 1988) less than a fortnight after Election Day, a wide-ranging discussion of the Network's short history and possible future took place. As the previous chapter showed, the process of collaborative research and action, seasoned by a profound commitment to a popular sector coalition model from some, was heated to a boil in the cauldron of electoral politics and a dramatic and polarized societal confrontation. The product was a collective post-election decision to continue the work of the PCN, defying most analytical frameworks and the expectations of some participants.[1] The decision was not generally intended to provide the Network with a temporary reprieve to allow a last gasp attempt to stop implementation of the FTA. While anti-free trade conviction remained passionate and cancellation (technically abrogation) of the deal was certainly on the PCN's renewed agenda, it was accompanied and perhaps even overshadowed by both more immediate and more ambitious considerations. This chapter will follow the PCN as it broadens its mandate and expands its activities moving beyond the single issue of free trade to take up new challenges.

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[1] Projections based on analytical frameworks are discussed in Chapter 2 above; "PCN, Dossier, to Continue," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 16 December 1988; see also interventions recorded in PCN Sixth Assembly Summary.

2. Moving on

At the PCN's December 1988 Assembly, more than forty representatives from twenty-seven organizations gathered in a general atmosphere of physical and emotional exhaustion. Together, they expressed a largely, and perhaps surprisingly given the results, positive sense of their collective achievements. Delegates praised specific aspects of the Network's campaign. The cartoon booklet, for example, was viewed as a highly successful intervention and put forward as a prototype for future endeavours. A member of the Communications Committee argued that most of the successful elements in the communications strategy had resulted from "going around" the mainstream media. As examples, he cited the massive distribution of the cartoon booklet and the full utilization of member groups' own internal media organs. Other projects, including key interventions on the Medicare and regional development issues were also highlighted during this session.[2]

Participants also attributed a positive overall impact to the PCN. They perceived the Network's role in: focusing the campaign around their chosen issue – this despite the reticence of more than one political party – and shifting public opinion over time to the point where a majority of Canadians came to oppose the FTA. A third result was viewed as a mixed blessing. Effective opposition had pulled the deal's corporate backers out of the boardrooms and back rooms and onto the offensive. Corporations, government agencies and the Conservative Party together spent a total of more than $50 million promoting the FTA in the two years leading up to the election, with at least $6 million in advertising purchased during the final two weeks of the election campaign alone. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Manufacturers Association called on their members to hold workplace meetings to press their employees to vote for the agreement. Some employers included pro-FTA materials with their pay packets.[3]

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[2] PCN Sixth Assembly Summary.

[3] The extent of spending by pro-free trade lobby groups is described in Nick Fillmore, "The Big Oink: How Business Won the Free Trade Battle," *This Magazine*, March-April 1989; Nick Fillmore, "Whose Money Backed the Free Trade Campaign?" *This Magazine*, March 1990; Salutin, *Waiting for Democracy: A Citizen's Journal*, 172; and "No Rules in Groups' Battle for Voters," *Ottawa Citizen*, 26 November 1988, B4.

Discussions at the post-election Assembly also highlighted weaknesses of the Network's campaign. The chair of the research committee reported on some of the difficulties faced in the relationship with the political parties. Indeed, Liberal strategists had been much more receptive to offers of assistance than had their NDP counterparts. While the Liberal campaign accepted and distributed a full complement of PCN briefing kits to all their parliamentary candidates, the NDP accepted only twelve – one per province plus the territories – even though hundreds were made available. Similar problems with the relationship with the NDP were reported at the local and provincial levels.[4]

Recurring themes in reports from member groups to the Assembly included the difficulty in gaining access to the mainstream media and in mobilizing effectively on the ground. A number of participants identified the failure to articulate alternatives to free trade as a major flaw in their collective efforts. From this perspective, they had left themselves powerless to counter the clarion call from free trade proponents that there was no alternative to international competition and consequently free trade. According to one academic observer, the FTA's opponents were "cast in the role of narrators of an 'anti-story'... little more than a defensive rebuttal to the tale of benefits advanced by the other side."[5] Not all PCN groups accepted this analysis; Council of Canadians' chair Maude Barlow argued that proposing alternatives was not the responsibility of FTA opponents prior to and during the election.[6] A further qualification came from economist Mel Watkins representing the Ontario CAFT: "When you're about to jump off a cliff not doing it seems to me to be a pretty good

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[4] This assessment of the PCN's relationship with the two opposition parties is based on personal interviews with Duncan Cameron, Tony Clarke and provincial coalition coordinators including Mary Boyd (PEI) and Sue Vohanka (BC); see also PCN, Notes on Pre-election Meetings with Opposition Parties, September 1988 and PCN Sixth Assembly Summary. On relationships at the provincial level, see Bleyer, "Coalition Building and the Canadian Popular Sector."

[5] Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: the Politics of Canadian Nationalism*, 112-13. Breton and Jenson argue that the PCN's position was characterized by an important dualism. On the one hand the Network "made extensive use of the discourse of opposition made familiar during the years of Fordism and its crisis." On the other hand the PCN was also trying to "do politics in new ways, independent of party politics, more democratically and with less of a statist focus." Gilles Breton and Jane Jenson, "After Free Trade and Meech Lake: Quoi de neuf?" *Studies in Political Economy*, no. 34 (1991): 209-10.

[6] PCN Sixth Assembly Summary; Barlow, Interview by author.

alternative." Nevertheless, the degree of concern on this point was reflected in the next issue of the *Pro-Canada Dossier*, which, reflecting on the Assembly's proceedings declared: "our greatest weakness as a movement [is that] we have not yet agreed on any meaningful alternative to the FTA."[7]

The lack of focus on alternatives in the Network's own materials and activities was, in part, inevitable given the limits to its internal consensus. The need to formulate and promote an alternative vision for Canada's social and economic development was raised repeatedly at PCN meetings from October 1987 onwards but seemed, just as consistently, to gravitate towards the bottom of the agenda.[8] In the aftermath of the election, there appeared to be agreement to make the articulation of alternatives a priority.[9]

Member organizations agreed to keep the Network alive and to broaden its resource base to deal with a wider mandate: opposing the neo-conservative agenda of the Mulroney government and its corporate friends. While there were differences in emphasis, the core rationale for supporting a continuation of the PCN was similar across sectors. A first taste of coalition work on a large scale left most groups with a thirst for more. Merely surviving the electoral battle with its consensus-based process relatively unscathed was no small feat for the PCN. Tempers had been frayed and disputes had arisen but a basic level of cooperation and trust had been maintained. Furthermore, electoral campaigns traditionally spell marginalization for non-party groups, as they get crowded out of the media and the public eye by the parties. While Network member groups did take a back seat to the parties and had great difficulty in getting through to the mainstream media, they most certainly did not disappear from the public stage.[10]

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[7] Watkins intervention recorded in PCN Sixth Assembly Summary; "Most Canadians Reject the FTA - But Tories Take More Seats," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 16 December 1988.

[8] Based on a review of meeting records in PCN files.

[9] PCN Sixth Assembly Summary.

[10] See Chapter 4 above.

3. Pressures of Partisanship

Whereas partisanship had always been a pressure point for the PCN. in the run-up to the federal election it became a central concern. The question was where the primary loyalties of key member groups and their leaders would lie, with the broader non-partisan goals of a nascent coalition, or with their traditional partisan choices.

Of all the organizational ties between Network member groups and political parties, none was more important than that between the labour movement and the NDP.[11] While its leadership would come to question this assessment in the aftermath of the 1988 campaign, the labour movement (CLC-affiliated) was structurally the dominant force within the political party they, in any case, called 'our party.' The CLC and its affiliates were also the source of a huge proportion of the NDP's funding, and trade union leaders held many of the top posts in the party hierarchy.

In 1988, the CLC planned and executed the largest and most ambitious parallel campaign on the party's behalf in its history.[12] In these circumstances, the PCN faced severe competition for labour movement resources. This extended to volunteer human resources since officers and staff of unions playing important roles within the Network and its affiliated provincial coalitions, were often also key players within the party.[13]

In contrast, no PCN member group carried any formal institutional link to the Liberal Party. A number of prominent individuals – mostly active in the Council of Canadians – had ties to the party. For example, Mel Hurtig, an unsuccessful Liberal candidate in 1968 was a denizen of the periphery of the party for years thereafter. and Maude Barlow, a past advisor to Liberal prime ministers Trudeau and Turner, tried

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[11] See Chapters 1 and 3 above.

[12] Interventions by Kerwin and Riche in PCN Sixth Assembly Summary. See also Chapters 3 and 4 above on the CLC-NDP relationship.

[13] Julie Davis, vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Labour. served as chair of the PCN's Strategy Committee and as president of the Ontario NDP; Michael Lewis of the Steelworkers was his unions' delegate to the Ontario Coalition against Free Trade and the PCN as well as a top organizer for the provincial NDP; Pat Kerwin's duties as CLC Political Action Coordinator gave him primary responsibility for the CLC's parallel campaign for the NDP while he also represented the Congress at the PCN table.

but failed to win a Liberal nomination in 1988.[14] By the fall of 1988, sympathy and sometimes support for the Liberal Party was not limited to its traditional supporters. Its enthusiastic opposition to the FTA had attracted broader backing, particularly within parts of the Left where, true to the tradition of popular frontism, fears of the irreversible implications of a Tory/FTA victory were fuelling arguments in favour of tactical voting.[15]

Over the course of the campaign, the labour movement's relationship with the NDP soured dramatically, reaching an all-time low after the vote. Unlike its party, labour was far from lukewarm in its opposition to the FTA and efforts were made to push the NDP to grab hold of the issue and run with it. Reflecting on these futile attempts and contrasting them with the loyalty, and generous commitment of time and resources they had made to the party, senior labour leaders like CAW president White, and USWA Canadian director Gerard Docquier were driven to consider the need for an alternative political voice.[16] Internal dissatisfaction with the NDP's performance was by no means limited to labour. Local party activists focused their ire on what they perceived to be the overly centralized nature of the campaign. Western New Democrats – from canvassers to candidates – questioned the central campaign's chosen tactics including the failure to lead on the trade issue. NDP candidates in British Columbia and Saskatchewan went so far as to abandon the strategic advice and the materials being provided by the national campaign and were rewarded with their party's best results.[17]

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[14] According to Doern and Tomlin, Council of Canadians membership in 1988 was 25% Liberal, 15% New Democrats and 50% non-partisan. Doern and Tomlin, *Faith and Fear: The Free Trade Story*, 210. On the partisan preferences of Council members, see also Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: the Politics of Canadian Nationalism.*

In contrast to Barlow, John Trent who was the PCN's other founding co-chair and the Council's chair from 1987 to 1988 was nominated and ran as an NDP candidate in the 1988 election.

[15] For example an editorial in the socialist magazine Canadian Dimension called for a 'united front' on free trade. Ages et al., "An Open Letter to John Turner and Ed Broadbent: United Front Needed to Defeat Free Trade."

[16] Bob White, Letter to NDP Officers and Executive Members, 28 November 1988 and Gerard Docquier, Letter to NDP Executive Members, 5 December 1988.

[17] On the NDP's election strategy, see Chapter 4 above.

In the absence of strong organizational ties to the Liberal Party, momentary enthusiasm for popular frontist tactics, and the NDP's own strategic choices conspired to provide better balance of partisan sympathies within the Network than might otherwise have been expected.

4. Beyond Parliamentary Politics

The results of the 1988 election reinforced an increasing frustration with parliamentary politics and liberal democratic electoralism more broadly, documented as the decline of party identification and dealignment/realignment in Canada and elsewhere. While disillusion was not limited to disappointed opponents of the FTA, it was acute for them and generated two distinct reactions, though defeat was not accompanied by the defeatism or hopelessness one might have expected. On the one hand, some sought a solution to a split parliamentary opposition in more 'sophisticated' electoral tactics – organized strategic or partisan alliances – or somewhat more substantial proposals for electoral reform leading to proportional representation.[18] On the other hand, frustration with electoral results gone wrong also led to a more substantive shift – away from traditional political tactics and further towards movement building and extra-parliamentary politics. Facing a second consecutive Conservative majority government elected with less than 50 percent support and a divided parliamentary opposition, PCN participants drew on what was generally regarded as a positive experience. Most valued the support and solidarity that had been generated, as well as the process of collective analysis where sectoral concerns had been linked producing a sense of the FTA's place in a broader social and political agenda.[19]

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[18] In a letter address to Network chair Tony Clarke and intended for broader distribution, Mel Hurtig laid out the lessons he had learned from the 1988 campaign. He expressed appreciation for the work of the Network but bemoaned its inability to "play political hardball" or intervene even more directly – through strategic voting – in the electoral process. Hurtig also laid out his plan for the next campaign. Mel Hurtig, Open Letter to PCN Assembly, 28 November 1988. Others – largely outside the PCN – would subsequently agree with Hurtig. Among others, see Kenneth McNaught, "To Topple the Tories and Save the Country," *Globe and Mail*, 7 March 1990, A7 and Joyce Nelson, "Voting the Unthinkable," *This Magazine*, March 1990, 3.

[19] PCN Sixth Assembly Summary. Confirmed in personal interviews with various participants.

Finally, the unprecedented unity and overt involvement of capital in the debate on free trade, and in the election campaign itself, convinced many activists that the rules of the political game were now dramatically altered. The orgy of media advertising laid on by the FTA's corporate backers in the closing days of the campaign, exposed as never before class divisions in Canadian society.[20] It is in this context that support for broadening the PCN's mandate beyond the trade deal to oppose a broader 'corporate agenda' was growing. For some, the stakes involved in the battle over the FTA now appeared much greater than they had first imagined. Others were hopeful that the unprecedented public identification of corporate interests with the trade deal would make opposition to a broader agenda more viable and less likely to be tarred as stemming from the fertile imaginations of conspiracy theorists. Lastly, the open and aggressive involvement of Canadian capital on one side of the debate narrowed the strategic options for those within the labour movement still open to tripartite solutions.[21]

The agenda for the Sixth Assembly in December 1988 was largely dedicated to a 'post-mortem' of the PCN's role in the fight against the FTA. From PCN chair Tony Clarke's perspective, the Assembly was a key turning point for the Network:

> The only question for the Assembly was whether or not this thing we had built was going to continue or not. There were all the reasons not to continue. We had come together around free trade, we had fought a battle, a decision had been made, and we had lost. So why stay together?

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[20] This was the conclusion drawn by many observers. See Jeanine Brodie, "The Free Trade Election," *Studies in Political Economy* 28, no. Spring (1989): 181; Campbell and Pal, *The Real Worlds of Canadian Politics; Cases in Process and Policy*, 197 and 203; Salutin, *Waiting for Democracy: A Citizen's Journal* ; Mel Watkins, "The Ed Scare, A Very False Alarm," *This Magazine*, February 1989. Yet another indication of the society-wide divisions exposed by the 1988 vote is the significant wage gap between pro and anti-FTA voters documented by Blais, "Public Opinion on Free Trade in the 1988 Election Campaign."

[21] David Laycock, "Organized Interests in Canada and the Free Trade Election," in *The Free Trade Agreement of 1988: Implications for the Future of Canadian-American Relations*, ed. Jane Jenson (Boston: Harvard University, Centre for International Affairs, 1989), 20. The Toronto Stock Exchange index and the Canadian dollar both dropped dramatically following the release of a poll putting the Liberals firmly in the lead. On the relationship between poll results and financial developments, see "Poll Results Spurs European Sell-off of Canadian Stocks," *Financial Post*, 8 November 1988, 11; "Dollar Drops Again on Election-poll Result," *Montréal Gazette*, 15 November 1988, C1; and Ted Jackson, "Liberal Surge Sends Markets Into Tailspin," *Financial Post*, 8 November 1988, 1. One journalist – representing a minority opinion within his profession – argues that financial market reactions combined with advertising blitz and threats to withdraw investment in the case of a defeat for the FTA amounted to a virtual capital strike. In Winters, ed., *The Silent Revolution: Media, Democracy, and the Free Trade Debate*, 67.

> I think this was one of the great moments in the history of the Network. I think that what happened there was that we had to come to grips with a number of things. On the positive side, people said yes we fought the battle and lost in terms of the electoral results, but we won something much bigger. And that is we learned how to work together and to build a network and a movement. I think people were pretty proud that despite all the problems we had built something of lasting importance and that was that we had put together the ingredients of a potential social movement in the country. And people said we want to stay together.[22]

Labour – notably in the person of CLC representatives at the table – appeared depressed by their inability to influence 'their' party and its subsequent electoral failure, despite the unprecedented material and moral support they had provided. This gloom was also nourished by the prospect of a re-invigorated Conservative Party carrying its neo-conservative policies into office for another term. NDP leader Ed Broadbent merely added insult to injury when he delivered an election night speech in which he was heard by free trade opponents to concede far more than the result of the ballot appeared to justify.[23]

But the CLC's representatives also expressed a hearty scepticism as to any future work on free trade and the PCN's prospects for survival. Though the relationship had reached its most disappointing point in years, labour's deep commitment to social democratic party politics was not to be abandoned quite so easily. Indeed, given its poor electoral results, the NDP might require a huge political and material commitment to survive and 'competing' formations could constitute a threat.[24] All in all, the CLC's special projects director rated the odds of the Congress maintaining its support for the PCN or abandoning it as about even. From the

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[22] Clarke, Interview by author.

[23] The lack of combativity and degree of resignation in Broadbent's concession speech might at another time have been considered appropriate. In this instance, it grated with many NDP supporters and others who were very aware that the majority of Canadians had voted for parties opposed to free trade. See, for example, Campbell and Pal, *The Real Worlds of Canadian Politics; Cases in Process and Policy*, 215; H.D. Forbes, "Absent Mandate '88? Parties and Voters in Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 25, no. 2, Summer (1990): 12.

[24] At a minimum this threat would be at the level of the allocation of scarce resources. Two of the CLC's four representatives at the Sixth Assembly were key NDP players. Nancy Riche, CLC and NDP Vice-president, had reached her position of prominence in the labour movement through her activism in the Newfoundland NDP. In fact, Riche's introduction to Ottawa came through her role on the CLC/NDP Political Action Committee. Riche, Interview by author. Pat Kerwin's position – CLC political action coordinator – was to all intents and purposes an extension of the NDP's bureaucracy with a job description focusing on organizing labour's support for the party.

perspective of this senior official, the decision to stick with the Network owed more to the aggressive legislative agenda advanced by the re-elected Tories and their corporate allies immediately following the election than to anything else.[25]

Unlike their CLC counterparts, representatives of some affiliates were far more positive regarding the PCN's future. Reflecting his union's commitment to nurturing social unionism (as well as its president's soon to be published critique of the NDP and the obsession with electoralism writ large), CAW Assistant to the president Sam Gindin identified the need to build a broader social movement and asked who would play this role if not the PCN.[26] Even the USWA, perhaps the NDP's most generous and forgiving backer, combined criticism of the party's election performance with positive noises regarding the PCN's prospects.[27]

Most community sector groups also expressed enthusiasm for the Network's future role. NAC and church social action groups were proponents of a broadening of the Network's mandate to include mobilizing opposition and developing alternatives to the 'corporate agenda.'[28] Reflecting their own organizational roots, they were also committed to broadening and deepening coalition participation. Many groups were also now very aware of the needs the next phase of neo-conservative governance would bring. NAC feared attacks on the funding it received from the federal

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[25] Kube, Interview by author.

[26] Intervention by Sam Gindin in PCN Sixth Assembly Summary. In a memorandum to Bob White, dealing more broadly with the future role of the NDP, Gindin makes a case for the PCN: "Perhaps it will be impossible to make the coalitions into a social movement. But we haven't been in as good a position for decades and have to make a committed attempt." Sam Gindin, Memorandum to Bob White and Bob Nickerson, 6 December 1988.

A few months later as he argued for sustaining funding for the PCN, Gindin would make the following case: "In the coming period, with closures rising and pressures for competitiveness and inflation-reduction rising, we may be in for some major battles... the response to 'restraint' should be militancy to offset the impact of inflation, increased payroll taxes, and increased sales taxes. There may also be selective sit-downs to highlight, for example, jobs moving to Mexico. *This will occur in the context of a media increasingly determined not to tell our story and an NDP that remains relatively weak. I don't want to exaggerate the ability of the coalitions to help us, but I think there is a real need on our part not to be isolated, to develop allies, to legitimate our struggle. The potential of the coalition to play such a supportive role is there and the national vehicle to do this is the PCN*" [emphasis mine]. Sam Gindin, Memorandum to Bob White and Bob Nickerson, 8 May 1989.

[27] Docquier, "Letter to NDP Executive Members."

[28] I discuss the evolving discourse of the Pro-Canada/Action Canada Network in Chapter 7 below.

government and saw the construction of defensive alliances as a top priority.[29]GATT-Fly and the social justice offices within the churches also sought support for internal battles. Stiff opposition from some church hierarchies throughout the work against the FTA had reached a peak during the election campaign with reactions similar to the response to *Ethical Reflections* five years earlier.[30]

The results of the 1988 vote contributed to an increasing frustration with the electoral process. For many activists, the election highlighted the need for a collective extra-parliamentary political vehicle, a message that some brought to the table at the December Assembly. These 'coalitionists in a hurry' – largely community sector and academia-based – argued that the Working Committee for Social Solidarity (WCSS) was more likely to provide the basis for the elaboration of an alternative platform than the PCN.[31] From their perspective, the PCN was now limited by the burden of consensus building in opposition to the FTA. In contrast, they argued, the WCSS had adopted an explicit orientation towards alternatives and was unimpeded by past compromise. This option – shifting energies to the Working Committee – was mooted in and around the December Assembly but failed to win the day. Instead, a strategy of deliberate but cautious transformation of the Network prevailed. Proponents of the WCSS proposal had underestimated not only the collective commitment of member groups to the PCN but their willingness to take the Network beyond its current mandate.[32]

The reaction of more narrowly nationalist groups to the election results is instructive for an understanding of the PCN's resilience. Formed by some small and medium-sized businesses, and led by payroll management company Comcheq's

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[29] Cohen, Interview by author.

[30] John Foster, Interview by author, Ottawa 1997; Howlett, Interview by author; Clarke, Interview by author. For background on the internal debates within the Catholic and other mainline churches, see Chapters 6 and 7 in Clarke, *Behind the Mitre: The Moral Leadership Crisis in the Canadian Catholic Church.*

[31] For background on the Working Committee for Social Solidarity, see Chapter 1 above.

[32] PCN Sixth Assembly Summary. Through a review of meeting records in WCSS files and interviews with participants a contrast emerges between the ideological commitment of participants in the Social Solidarity process and the PCN's substantive action agenda (campaigning and organization building) with immediate public policy objectives.

founder and CEO, Bill Loewen, the Business Council for Fair Trade had, for the most part, been a half-hearted participant in the Network's activities and after the election it ceased to participate.[33] In contrast, the Council of Canadians renewed its strong commitment to the PCN. While the Council's stated focus was on monitoring the FTA in order to publicize its impact, this appeared to be with a view to tying the trade agreement to the broader corporate agenda. The Council's decision to continue its fight against free trade was not unexpected: it was the obvious path for an explicitly nationalist group. But the group's commitment to broadening the Network's mandate beyond a nationalist focus was less predictable. In this regard, the Council's leadership was reflecting a change of perspective resulting from its engagement with free trade. Chair Maude Barlow and other leading Council members felt that their understanding of the FTA had been transformed by their work within the PCN. One symptom of this change was an emerging rift within the Council between more narrowly nationalist elements and Maude Barlow's leadership.[34]

Strong support for maintaining and building the PCN also came from provincial coalitions hoping to maintain the pan-Canadian linkages that had developed under the Network's aegis. The coalitions valued the access and voice the PCN provided them *vis-à-vis* relatively resource-rich national organizations. The Network also opened up an alternative route for these coalitions to approach or pressure the provincial leadership of national organizations – i.e., from the top.[35]

The Coalition against Free Trade (Ontario) was one of the many provincial groups strongly in favour of maintaining and expanding the PCN. The Ontario coalition's support was particularly significant because its Toronto-based staff had carried much of the organizing load for national activities even long after the

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[33] For details on the Business Council for Fair Trade, see its Mission Statement reprinted in *The Fair Trader*, February 1988. Loewen and his organization were very supportive of the PCN and its anti-FTA goals and expressed this through financial support. It was politically and organizationally more difficult for this group to join in the Network's action plans and the gap widened as the PCN's mandate broadened.

[34] Barlow, Interview by author; Spratt, Interview by author.

[35] Personal interviews with members and staff of the PEI, Alberta, Manitoba and Newfoundland coalitions.

founding of the PCN in April 1987. For example, CAFT staffers were responsible for most of the planning and facilitation behind the May 1988 lobby of federal opposition leaders, the 12 June National Day of Action, and the cartoon booklet. At first, the Ottawa-based Network simply did not have the resources to assume responsibility for these tasks. Later, the Toronto-based coalition continued to carry some of the burden at least partly because of its reticence to trust the new national process. The central concern was that the Network and its fledgling secretariat (at this point a two person staff complement largely dependent on in-kind resources) might be unduly influenced by national organizations based in Ottawa such as the CLC and the Council of Canadians. It might consequently tend towards a bureaucratized and watered-down opposition to the deal and end up dampening rather than building national mobilization.[36]

The Toronto group only expressed real trust in the PCN's 'relative autonomy' from its largest components, and its potential effectiveness after the 1988 election. CAFT representatives made this clear at the December 1988 Assembly and confirmed the vote of confidence in a February 1989 memorandum to other member groups calling for a strengthened and reconstituted Network based in Ottawa:

> The Coalition Against Free Trade agreed that establishing a firmer base in Ottawa for our movement is urgent. The free trade fight has demonstrated that popular groups can effectively act together but we are in danger of losing the momentum we have generated if we try to operate through a nickel and dime approach.[37]

This intervention marked the Ontario group's withdrawal from a front-line role at the national level and helped to focus attention on developing a resource base for the Network to continue its activities.

The consensus in favour of keeping the Pro-Canada Network alive at the December Assembly led to this very question: What structure and resource base would the PCN now need? From its inception, funding for the Network's basic

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[36] Personal interviews with CAFT members including Marjorie Cohen, Laurell Ritchie, and James Turk.

[37] Coalition Against Free Trade, Memorandum to PCN Member Groups, February 1989.

operations had been both limited and tenuous. Because its largest project, the cartoon booklet, had been largely run out of the CAFT in Toronto, the PCN had been confined to a very slim organizational existence. While substantial in-kind resources, both human and material, were contributed to the Network's activities, only one staff person was directly responsible to and paid for with PCN funds. During this period, the Network's operations depended on huge commitments of time from some member organizations, notably by the chair Tony Clarke, his assistant in his role as co-director of the Social Affairs Commission of the CCCB, and the support of the staff of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives that had loaned office space to the Network.[38]

In the aftermath of the federal election, in-kind help was unlikely to remain so plentiful. With the heat of the electoral battle subsiding, member groups would return to their own sectoral and institutional agendas. Furthermore, many organizations themselves faced severe financial difficulties. Trade unions felt the impact of a continuing economic downturn on membership numbers while other groups were dealing with past cuts in government support and bracing for more. Within the labour movement, severe disappointment with the NDP's campaign performance, a continuing commitment to a building a social democratic party as a primary strategy, and continuing losses in membership and dues, were all factors in decisions around support for coalition building and the PCN.

In the end, the Assembly agreed to render permanent and, as soon as possible, increase the Network's staff complement, establish an office that would be less dependent on in-kind resources, and attempt to regularize and broaden the funding base. A new committee was established to advance these organizational goals and to take on the task of paying off the debt incurred in the production and distribution of the cartoon booklet.[39]

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[38] See PCN files and financial records in particular. The assessment of the CCPA's contribution is based on information from an interview with the organization's administrator Diane Touchette. The importance of in-kind contributions was also suggested by other informants.

[39] PCN Sixth Assembly Summary.

5. Budget '89: further onto the defensive

With a broader mandate in place, the Assembly also set twin tasks for the Network: (a) reinforcing and carrying forward its new consensus and (b) advancing into a new phase of campaigning combining opposition to government initiatives with building a popular base for an alternative agenda.[40]

As it happened, the impatience of the re-elected Conservative government and its corporate allies to move forward with their own common agenda helped to buttress the mandate-broadening process underway within the PCN. Within hours of the Conservative victory on 24 November, corporate leaders started to call for the very measures they had publicly disavowed during the election campaign. They clamoured for a reduction in government spending and targeted social programs in particular for cuts. The CMA proposed a royal commission on social spending, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce pushed for a complete overhaul of the UI system and the BCNI demanded a drastic reduction in the federal deficit. These positions flew in the face of these groups' own advertising messages during the campaign. Full-page ads sponsored by the Canadian Alliance for Trade and Job Opportunities, for example, had left a very different impression. In answer to the question "Won't Canadian Business lobby to reduce spending on social and other programs?" millions of Canadians could read the reassuring answer "Not at all" in their newspapers as they sipped their morning coffee.[41]

The commitment of many Network member groups was also reinforced by the economic news that followed the election. Corporate reassurances that free trade would bring economic revitalization and new jobs were swept away by a torrent of mergers, plant shutdowns and job losses. Proponents of free trade were quick to argue that the southward flow of jobs was unrelated to the deal, merely the result of the

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Ad reprinted in *Pro-Canada Dossier*, March 1989. On the onslaught of advertisements aimed at calming Canadians fears of free trade, see Maude Barlow, *Parcel of Rogues: How Free Trade is Failing Canada* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1990), 82-85; Salutin, *Waiting for Democracy: A Citizen's Journal*, 269-81; Nelson, *The Sultans of Sleaze*. For a critique of the post-FTA attack on the Unemployment Insurance program, see Laurell Ritchie, "The Attack on UI," *This Magazine*, November 1989.

economic downturn. For FTA opponents the distinction was spurious and for Canadians in general it was likely cold comfort. PCN member groups, led by the CLC and the Council of Canadians, compiled and publicized job loss statistics.[42]

The renewed offensive from the corporate sector served to reinforce the PCN's new mandate. In addition, 'trial balloons' floated by government officials hinted at an ambitious agenda of public sector retrenchment in the upcoming first budget of the Conservative government's new term. Anticipating this eventuality, the PCN issued a challenge to the Conservatives to live up to promises made during the election campaign, while linking the upcoming budget to the FTA. The statement "Canada's First Free Trade Budget: a Declaration and a Challenge" combined a reminder to the government of its electoral promises with a series of specific demands. These included maintaining the universality of social programs, progressive tax reform, opposition to an increase in the military budget, and the promotion of employment as a priority. Detailed briefing notes making the case for the demands accompanied the statement.[43]

In an effort to link its defence against expected government initiatives with discussion of policy alternatives, the Network also developed and issued a discussion document entitled "An Alternative Budget: a Popular Planning Process." The simple low-cost illustrated leaflet was provided to member groups to promote discussion and debate on the policy issues covered in federal budgets and to assist with the formulation of popular sector demands in advance of the 1989 budget.[44]

When the budget finally came down on 27 April, it confirmed the place of the Free Trade Agreement in a broader neo-conservative agenda. As PCN chair Tony Clarke noted:

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[42] Job loss statistics were reported in the CLC's new publication Trade Watch starting early in 1989. The Council's six month Report Card claimed 33,000 jobs lost; after one year the CLC calculated more than 77,000 jobs lost through more than fifty major plant shutdowns; see also "Network Watch," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, May 1989.

[43] PCN, "Canada's Free Trade Budget: A Declaration and a Challenge," March 1989; PCN, News Release, "Popular Coalition challenges Mulroney Government," Ottawa, 17 April 1989; PCN, "Budget 1989 Briefing Notes."

[44] PCN, "Alternative Budget Working Document," 1989.

> This first free trade budget is a definite move to harmonize the structure of our economy, our society, and our culture with the requirements of the Free Trade Agreement.[45]

The Conservative government had moved onto the offensive on a number of fronts: the Unemployment Insurance program was restructured to remove the government's financial contribution, universality of the Family Allowance and Old Age Pension programs was ended via a tax 'claw back,' privatization of publicly owned Air Canada moved a step further, and Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) was slashed.[46]

Two further measures in the budget were particularly strong magnets for opposition: cuts in government funding for advocacy groups – e.g., women and aboriginal – and a massive reduction in the operations of VIA Rail, Canada's passenger rail service.[47] NAC was one of the hardest hit advocacy groups. In a move that looked very much like retaliation for its strong stand against free trade, the group was dealt a 50 percent cut in the federal contribution to its budget over three years. Spokesperson Laurell Ritchie expressed a widely held view when she declared: "We feel this attack is because of our effectiveness in opposing regressive government initiatives."[48]

The federal budget demonstrated the hollowness of the myriad promises made by the Conservatives and their corporate allies in the course of selling free trade. The

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[45] PCN, News Release, "Canadians Reap the Whirlwind of Free Trade," Ottawa, 28 April 1989; according to Winnipeg Free Press columnist Frances Russell, the PCN's response to the Budget received little media attention. In Winters, ed., *The Silent Revolution: Media, Democracy, and the Free Trade Debate*, 77.

[46] "Budget Begins FTA Harmonization," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, May 1989. On Unemployment Insurance (UI), see "Tories Choke Debate on UI Changes," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 18 August 1989.

[47] For an outline of the genesis of federal funding of advocacy groups, see Chapter 3 above and Pal, *Interests of State: The Politics of Language, Multiculturalism and Feminism in Canada.* On VIA Rail, see "VIA Analysis," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 1 January 1990.

[48] Quoted in "Network Watch," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, May 1989, 7. For an assessment of the cuts to women's groups, see "Ottawa Puts Squeeze on Feminists," *Toronto Star*, 25 February 1989, H1. One NAC spokesperson was quoted in the media as saying: "it's just an awful day for women's groups. They didn't know this was coming. There hasn't been another cut like it. ... This goes to the bone of the movement." Quoted in Pal, *Interests of State: The Politics of Language, Multiculturalism and Feminism in Canada*, 148. And yet, the government's move was far from unexpected, NAC president Lynn Kaye had even raised the prospect of these actions at the PCN's post-election Assembly. In PCN Sixth Assembly Summary.

budget also served to confirm the PCN as a place where member groups would come to seek support in dealing with the impact of the FTA and other public policies on their constituencies. For some groups, above all those with more limited resources, the anticipation of struggles to come contributed to their interest in seeing the PCN continue after December 1988.[49] In its post-election issue, the *Pro-Canada Dossier* anticipated this function as part of a coalition model that starts to take on the appearance of a mutual defence pact:

> Many are going to be hurt by the FTA experiment we need to pull together in defending against these attacks. The strength of the coalitional approach is precisely that we do not leave it only to the workers who are thrown out of a job or to their union to fight plant closures and layoffs.[50]

Unlike most of the groups representing constituencies directly affected by measures in the budget – e.g. labour, women, seniors – Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in international development had not participated in the PCN. The Conservatives frontal assault on ODA sparked substantial soul searching among these NGOs as well as a series of meetings between PCN representatives and two NGOs in particular – Oxfam Canada and Interpares – both of which joined the Network during this period.[51]

Coming hard on the heels of the PCN's post-election deliberations, the 1989 budget had a formative influence on the Network. Its impact on member constituencies pushed the PCN into a reactive mode, putting a premium on cross-sectoral solidarity. By reneging on commitments made in the heat of the electoral debate, the federal government reconfirmed the validity of the PCN's core agenda – opposition to free trade – and maintained its power to drive movement convergence. The budget was an opportunity for the Network to make explicit the links between

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[49] Interventions by NAC representatives and provincial coalition activists at the December 1988 Assembly stand out in this regard. See PCN Sixth Assembly Summary.

[50] "The Struggle Enters a New Phase," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 16 December 1988. The *Pro-Canada Dossier*'s content tended to reflect the commitment to coalition or convergence politics of GATT-Fly the organization that produced it. The ongoing misgivings of some member organizations, like the CLC, about the 'coalition approach' were rarely reflected in its pages.

[51] Tony Clarke, Interview by author.

free trade and the 'corporate agenda' targeted by its broader mandate.[52] The door to an expanded membership also opened as outreach brought development NGOs into the fold. At the same time, the pressure for a defensive response returned the promotion of alternatives to the back burner. When the smoke had cleared, all that remained of the PCN's intent to act proactively was the timing of its initial intervention – i.e., it had anticipated the federal budget with a series of demands rather than merely responding after the fact with a critique.

6. Get the Budget on Track

The 1989 federal budget also inspired the first substantial campaign by the Network after the 1988 election. In a match up that would have been unlikely prior to the popular sector cooperation that developed around the PCN, NAC and the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers (CBRTGW) joined forces to initiate a Campaign to Get the Budget on Track. Starting from separate initiatives from the two groups, the campaign was planned by a steering committee including representatives of NAC, the rail union, other groups concerned with the VIA cuts and the PCN. The focal point was a cross-country train trip by activists – drawing on the powerful historical precedent of the 'On to Ottawa Trek' by the unemployed during the Depression – to bring attention to the impact budget measures would have on the lives of Canadians from coast to coast.[53]

Thematically, the campaign built on the sectoral demands of the women's movement and the rail unions, emphasizing their specific concerns as part of a dismantling of the broader postwar 'social contract.' The core document for the campaign highlighted the central role of the FTA by tying the abandonment of the

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[52] All PCN materials prepared around the 1989 Budget were explicit in noting the free trade – corporate agenda link. PCN files.

[53] NAC, Letter to Member Organizations, 24 May 1989; Press releases describing the campaign include PCN, News Release, "Groups Launch Campaign to 'Get the Budget on Track'," Ottawa, 31 May 1989; PCN, News Release, "Original Trekker Joins Cross-Country Budget Protest," Ottawa, 7 June 1989; PCN, News Release, "Quilting on the Railroad," Ottawa, 7 June 1989; PCN, News Release, "Budget Campaign Arrives in Ottawa," Ottawa, 9 June 1989; PCN, "List of Participants, June 12th Campaign Event," Ottawa, 1989. See also "Network Watch," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, May 1989, 7.

social contract with the process of social and economic policy harmonization with the United States.

> Past and present generations of Canadians have developed a unique social contract with their government. Through this social contract, Canadians have claimed their basic democratic rights as citizens to a system of social programs designed to ensure decent employment, income security, education, health care, public services, consumer protection, cultural development, and fair taxation... The current federal government is now breaking that social contract.
>
> The Free Trade Agreement has set the stage for harmonizing our economy and social programs with the economy and social programs of the United States. The recent Wilson budget serves to accelerate this process. Together, these economic strategies will destroy the investment of past generations in our national and democratic future.[54]

The Network's initial role – mobilizing broader popular sector support for the campaign – rapidly evolved into a much larger coordinating role. With additional donations of $4,300 from sponsoring organizations, the Network hired an organizer and, along with NAC's secretariat, undertook the coordination of solidarity activities across the country, as well as media relations at the national level. Despite a shoestring budget and very shaky start, the campaign was successful in developing some public profile and momentum.[55]

The train campaign continued the outreach begun with the initial response to the budget, bringing groups like the advocacy group for rural communities Rural Dignity into the PCN fold and enhancing the relationship between the Network and the Assembly of First Nations.[56] It also set a pattern for the PCN's involvement in campaigns: directly affected constituencies would initiate campaigns but look to the Network for support in planning and coordination. The various hiccups encountered by the train campaign indicate that the organizational model was very much a work in

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[54] PCN, "Breaking the Social Contract: A Joint Response to the Wilson Budget," 31 May 1989.

[55] Linda Diebel, "'Crab-grass Coalition' Takes to Rails against Budget," *Toronto Star*, 3 June 1989, B1; Paul Koring, "Anti-budget Campaign by Women's Group off to Confused Start," *Globe and Mail*, 16 May 1989, A5; and Paul Koring, "Coalition to Ride the Rails in Fight Against the Budget," *Globe and Mail* 1989, A1.

[56] On Rural Dignity, see Cynthia Patterson, "Leaving Normal: Life with Rural Dignity," *Action Canada Dossier*, May-June 1992; the assessment of the relationship between the AFN and the PCN is based on materials in the Network's files as well as the author's interviews with various coalition participants and staff. For an example, see Pro-Canada Network and Native Women's Association of Canada, "Statement of Solidarity in Support of First Nations' Rights," Ottawa, Fall 1990.

progress. As a member of the Network's Strategy Committee recalls, not without humour, the campaign generated more than a little confusion:

> Who's calling the shots, where are the good ideas, and how do you make it all happen? Who is doing what? Whose train is this anyway? But none of this stopped it from generating a lot of enthusiasm.[57]

Following up on the budget campaign, the PCN's Eighth Assembly (June 1989) identified the emerging struggle over taxation as a priority.[58] Proposals for a tax on consumption (Goods and Services Tax or GST) were already being panned from the political Right as a government tax grab. Represented by economist Marjorie Cohen, NAC suggested that progressives could not allow the Right to carry opposition to this measure. Already in November 1989, 31 percent of Canadian viewed the proposed GST as the most important public policy issue.[59] One month later, polls put opposition to the tax at 61 percent while 59 percent of respondents indicated they would not support incumbent MP's who voted for the tax.[60] Cohen, fresh from a NAC meeting that had made the GST and taxation top priorities for its work in the coming year, made the case for cross-sectoral attention to the issue. At its next Assembly (October 1989), the PCN launched what was initially a limited and resource-starved campaign on the issue.[61] The various materials prepared for the campaign placed the GST in the context of a shifting overall tax mix – i.e., decreasing corporate taxes, declining progressivity of the income tax, etc. While the proposed consumption tax was identified as a central concern, it was also explicitly tied to other economic policy issues such as inflation and unemployment. Finally, slated to replace an existing tax on Canadian manufacturers, the GST was tagged as a free trade tax.[62]

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[57] Bickerton, Interview by author.

[58] PCN, Ninth Assembly Summary.

[59] *The Reid Report*, May 1993, 2.

[60] Angus Reid and Gallup polling quoted in Campbell and Pal, *The Real Worlds of Canadian Politics; Cases in Process and Policy*, 390.

[61] "Network Launches Campaign to Beat Tories' Regressive Tax," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 6 October 1989, 1. The campaign launch is reported in Alan Freeman, "Coalition to Fight the GST," *Globe and Mail*, 21 October 1989, A7. NAC's intervention on GST is in Summary of Discussion and Decisions, PCN, Eighth Assembly, Ottawa, 10-11 June 1989; the decision to launch the GST campaign is recorded in PCN Eighth Assembly Summary; on the GST campaign, see also PCN, "Strategy Timetable," Pro-Canada Network, 11 January 1989.

[62] "New Tax to Replace Revenues Lost in FTA," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 18 August 1989.

7. The Campaign for Fair Taxes

Perhaps the most important consequence of the PCN's GST campaign through the fall of 1989 was the momentum it generated for a more ambitious endeavour. By the end of the year, the CLC's Executive Council had agreed to undertake a major mobilization against the GST in the coming spring. A proposal was drafted in December and informally tested with CLC affiliates and the PCN's Steering Committee. After some amendments based on comments received from these groups, a plan for a cross-sectoral mobilization against the GST and for progressive taxation was presented to a meeting convened by the Congress at a Toronto airport hotel. [63]

While they were enthused by the CLC's commitment to a major mobilization, a number of non-CLC representatives at the meeting held on 4 January were critical of the nature of the action as well as the structure being proposed for the campaign. The proposal reflected very few of the comments gathered at a PCN Steering Committee meeting in December and forwarded to Congress vice-president Nancy Riche in a memorandum from Network chair Tony Clarke.[64] Specifically, non-labour organizations were worried that the form of protest proposed by the CLC – a one-day 'National Ballot' or referendum on the GST – was too narrowly focused on the workplace limiting participation within their own constituencies and in communities across the country.[65] More broadly, community sector groups participating in the Pro-Canada Network were concerned that the CLC proposal would lead to a parallel coalition structure. Their apprehension was fuelled by their limited input into the

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[63] See CLC, "National Ballot on the GST," Campaign proposal circulated at meeting, Canadian Labour Congress, 4 January 1990; Pat Kerwin, "January 14 Update on the GST Campaign," Canadian Labour Congress, January 1990; Kerwin, Interview by author and Clarke, Interview by author.

[64] Clarke noted the importance of positioning the GST campaign as part of a broader and longer-term campaign that would engage the labour movement and other movements. He also emphasized the importance of a structure for the campaign that would allow for real influence by community sector groups and provincial coalitions as well as labour. Specific suggestions included the formation of a national campaign committee as well as sub committee's to deal with communications, media and logistics. Finally, Clarke tied PCN involvement in the campaign to the availability of additional resources in a thinly veiled plea for funding. Tony Clarke, Memorandum to Nancy Riche, 20 December 1989. Clarke believed this intervention with Riche was necessary to prevent the CLC from shifting back towards the 'command-control' model of coalition building that had characterized earlier stages in the popular sector's development. Clarke, Interview by author.

[65] See the CLC's original campaign proposal, "National Ballot on the GST"; as well as Kerwin, "January 14 Update on the GST Campaign."

planning process and confirmed by the pre-packaged news release the Congress intended to issue at the close of the meeting to launch the campaign. From their perspective, the CLC was circumventing the PCN structure, posing a threat to its future as a cross-sectoral multi-issue coalition.[66] The fact that the lack of attention to structure and process evident in the CLC initiative remained even after comments from the PCN accentuated these fears. At the close of the January meeting, CLC vice-president Nancy Riche called for volunteers and then proposed to proceed with the resulting unrepresentative group as a steering committee for the campaign. The issue was revisited after complaints from a number of groups.

Inviting business groups to participate in the campaign was also a subject for discussion at the initial meeting. Given the ideological breadth of opposition to the GST, it was an inevitable question. For some PCN groups it raised the spectre of the type of bipartite formation reflected in the CLC-initiated Dialogue '86 event. Their preference for the PCN's 'popular sector-only' model was reflected in their insistence that the campaign twin opposition to the GST with support for progressive tax alternatives that would be anathema to most business groups.[67]

Concerns with business participation and the structure of the campaign reflected a wider sentiment of unease. In essence, community sector groups feared that the CLC either did not fully understand or did not concur with the new model of cooperation they felt they were constructing through the PCN.[68] Riche and Clarke subsequently negotiated a series of changes aimed at addressing these concerns. The changes were described in an update issued by the CLC that dealt with the issue of the campaign's structure as follows:

> a) It has been noted that we are running a campaign and not establishing a permanent coalition. At the same time, it is important that we build on existing networks. Participation is open to any group, including business that supports

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[66] Personal interviews with participants.

[67] On Dialogue '86, see Chapter 3 above. The reaction of some non-CLC groups to the January 4th meeting is laid out in some detail in correspondence including: John Lang, Secretary Treasurer, CCU, Letter to Harold David, Executive Assistant, CCU, 8 January 1990 and Raye Anne Briscoe, Executive Assistant, National Farmers Union, Letter to PCN Chair Tony Clarke, 8 January 1990.

[68] Author's interviews with participants.

the overall objective of the campaign. Business will not be invited onto the Steering committee;[69]

b) The CLC will take the responsibility for organizing the participation of its affiliates and will work closely with unions which are not affiliated to it to establish the workplace vote;

c) The Pro-Canada Network will take the prime responsibility helping to *coordinate* campaign activities with the non-labour groups [emphasis mine]; [70]

d) There will be a National Campaign Group which will be comprised of all national organizations (labour and non-labour) supporting the campaign and provincial GST campaign committees.

e) There will be a Steering Committee that will be co-chaired by Nancy Riche, Executive Vice-President CLC, Tony Clarke, Chair PCN, and a representative of Québec Coalition Against the GST. In public events, there will be an undertaking to include spokespersons from other groups. Membership of the Steering Committee should be reflective of the different sectors in the national group.

f) At the provincial level, committees paralleling the national group will be set up;[71]

g) Within each national group, appropriate coordinating structures will be put in place.[72]

The changes to the structure provided more clarity and dealt with the specific concerns of non-labour groups and provincial coalitions such as participation by business groups and provincial structures for the campaign. The campaign's structure was a variant on the model adopted for the previous budget train campaign, when the PCN's chair and coordinator joined representatives of the initiating organizations – NAC and the CBRT – on the campaign committee. In this case, the distinct role played by Québec groups was recognized with the appointment of three co-chairs as suggested by community sector groups at the January meeting. The CLC had also agreed to expand the 'National Ballot' to cover two days, spanning workweek and

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[69] This was a direct response to the particular concern of community sector groups that the structure adopted for this campaign might breach the popular sector model developed by the PCN. See above.

[70] This section of the original draft of this document, prior to PCN chair's comments, was considered to reflect the CLC's lack of sensitivity to the appearance of its dominance or to undervaluing the ACN's role. It read: "The PCN will take the prime responsibility to contact the non-labour groups. The CLC will provide funds to PCN to defray the costs of undertaking this task"[emphasis mine]. In Pat Kerwin, Draft Memorandum, December 1990.

[71] The PCN's member provincial coalitions were concerned that, in the absence of joint campaign structures at the provincial level, they would sidelined by the CLC's own provincial federations. The degree of concern varied depending on the existing working relationship between coalition and federation in each province. See PCN, "Notes from Conference Call with Provincial Coalitions," Ottawa, 11 January 1990.

[72] CLC, "Update on GST Campaign," 14 January 1990.

weekend, in order to broaden participation. Finally the Congress agreed to consider a proposal from the PCN regarding the resources it would need in order to coordinate the campaign. Network Strategy Committee co-chair, and CUPW staff member, Geoff Bickerton negotiated with the CLC staff responsible for the campaign, Political Action Coordinator Pat Kerwin and Director of Special Projects Art Kube.[73]

In the end, the Campaign for Fair Taxes was widely viewed as successful. A series of coordinated regional and local actions culminated in the collection of over two million protest cards in communities and workplaces across the country on 7 and 9 April 1990. The card count on 9 April from a downtown Ottawa Hotel was the final event in a five-week long campaign. Coordinated local events – news conferences, street theatre, seminars – were used to publicize little known facts about the tax system – business expense deductions, corporate non-payment, etc.– and promote progressive alternatives. This combination of local actions with a national profile was considered key to the success of the Fair Taxes protest.[74]

The campaign had a very positive short-term impact on coalition building. At the national level, a number of new groups and some entirely new constituencies joined in the Network's activities. Overall, the coalition approach also gained kudos within the labour movement. For example, in his report to the CLC's executive committee, Pat Kerwin argued:

> Despite all the problems with coalition campaigns, it is fair to say that without such a structure we would not have achieved the success that we did.[75]

From CUPE's perspective, the verdict was also positive.

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[73] Ibid.; In fact, the Network's role also included coordinating the participation of labour groups not affiliated to the CLC including CCU affiliates and the Canadian Conference of Teamsters. The PCN developed a $35,000 campaign budget that included expenses for staffing, and the production of materials. This funding was also used to augment the PCN's meagre office infrastructure and had a longer-term positive impact. Bickerton, Interview by author and Mandy Rocks, Interview by author, Ottawa, 20 April 1997.

[74] Jim Stanford and Larry Katz, "The Fair Taxes Fight: Ten Lessons Learned from the Campaign to Stop the GST," *CUPE Facts* 1990.

[75] Pat Kerwin, "Campaign for Fair Taxes: Report to the CLC Executive Council," Canadian Labour Congress, 3 May 1990.

> Work in coalition. Without a doubt this is the most important lesson that we can learn form the April 7-9 campaign. Organized labour simply could not have achieved these good results on its own.[76]

The campaign's success at the local level was reflected in the dozens of committees and coalitions set-up from coast to coast.[77] National and local events garnered substantial profile for national organizations, provincial coalitions and local groups involved in the campaign.[78]

Some criticisms were made of the campaign's execution. The Congress had insisted on a national print media campaign under its complete control. At an evaluation meeting attended by campaign coordinators from its affiliates, the CLC's concentration on national media was viewed as much less effective than an emphasis on community, local, and the movement's own media resources might have been. The ads themselves were also subjected to withering criticism.[79] In the longer run, reviews of the campaign and the April mobilization also identified the failure to plan and facilitate follow-up. This included the inability to put the 2.2 million cards that had been collected to good use, either through some public display or by developing mailing lists.[80] Most critically, the lack of plans for follow-up undermined some of the important gains made at the local and provincial levels.[81] For some critics, the CLC's

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[76] Stanford and Katz, "The Fair Taxes Fight: Ten Lessons Learned from the Campaign to Stop the GST," 10.

[77] The Ontario Coalition for Social Justice claimed the formation of more than two dozen local committees in Ontario alone, while the coalition in Alberta established several committees in that province and eleven committees were set-up in Saskatchewan. In Bleyer, "Coalition Building and the Canadian Popular Sector." See also Wes Norheim, "Prairie Region GST Report," CLC, Regina, 2 March 1990.

[78] The PCN member provincial coalitions had identified the potential for grassroots coalition building through the Campaign for Fair Taxes from the outset. See, for example, Jim Turk, Memorandum to Local Coalition Coordinators, 19 February 1990.

[79] Kerwin, "Campaign for Fair Taxes: Report to the CLC Executive Council"; see also correspondence between the CLC and the CAW. Derik Hodgson, Memorandum to Nancy Riche, 21 March 1990; Peggy Nash, Letter to Shirley Carr, 10 March 1990.

[80] The Campaign Steering Committee spent hours debating logistical details such as the uses of the cards. The committee eventually decided not to attempt to collect information – names, addresses, etc. – from the cards. Various minutes of meetings, Campaign for Fair Taxes and author's interviews with members of the committee.

During the planning process, CLC Communications Director Derik Hodgson had strenuously argued for a ballot that would include a pro-GST option to prevent being "accused of running an old style Soviet Stalinist election." Hodgson, "Memorandum to Nancy Riche."

[81] Turk, Interview by author.

failure to prepare beyond the April events was merely a reflection of the campaign's internal political purpose for the Congress. From this perspective, the timing of the April mobilization – i.e., prior to the CLC's bi-annual convention in May – was aimed a staving off criticism of Congress president Shirley Carr's inaction that was coming from a number of directions within the labour movement. The argument is a familiar one since the spring has often been the high point in the CLC's action cycle – for example in 1986, with the initiation of the campaign on Free Trade, Deregulation and Privatization – as the leadership gears up to face delegates at convention. There was undoubtedly very limited political capital in planning for high levels of activity in the Campaign Fair Taxes to continue past early April.

There is nevertheless substantial evidence that the GST campaign influenced the outcome of the CLC's May Convention beyond securing another term for the leadership. The main political program document presented to delegates showcased the campaign beginning with a glowing reference to its success:

> The 1990 Convention of the Canadian Labour Congress begins exactly five weeks after 2.2 million Canadians voted against the proposed Goods and Services Tax and in favour of fair taxation. This historic protest reflects a widespread and deeply felt anger and frustration that many Canadians feel.[82]

Reflecting critiques of the campaign, the two-year Program of Action adopted by delegates identified the development of regional coalitions as a priority, and the CLC's Executive Council subsequently decided to focus a National Day of Action slated for the fall on the tax issue.

Throughout the winter and spring of 1990, as work on the Campaign for Fair Taxes was underway, internal discussion on the relative merits of coalition building continued within the labour movement. While this debate was reflected in the varying commitment of different unions to the Campaign for Fair Taxes, and in the positions they staked out on campaign strategy and tactics, it was also a central point of contention in the preparation of the program to be presented to the 1990 CLC Convention. In a letter to Congress president Carr, CUPE president Jeff Rose states

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[82] CLC, "Taking Hold of our Future: Fighting the Political Platform of the Tories and Big Business," Document 13: Eighteenth Constitutional Convention, CLC, May 1990.

his union's preference for the coalition model and critiques the CLC's failure to fully adopt it:

> The overall strategic theme should be something like "Building an Alternative Future Together" thus hammering home the notion that if we are serious as a movement about winning, we must work together with our coalition partners and change the terms of the political debate in the country. The document we were presented is not such a document... What is required is something which reflects the need to maintain, strengthen and broaden coalition work. We should clearly point out and give emphasis to the need to work together with the Pro-Canada Network and other coalition partners. The document does not do this sufficiently – in fact, it shift the emphasis to internal adjustments within the labour movement... I think it is wrong (especially now) to see coalition work and internal labour matters as competing themes.[83]

Over the course of the summer the GST gained even more prominence, largely thanks to the decision of a committee of the Liberal dominated Senate to hold cross-country hearings on the issue. By summer's end, battle lines were drawn between Liberal Senators now anxious to block GST legislation and a Conservative government moving to fill vacant seats in the upper house to overcome the Liberal majority. In September, Prime Minister Mulroney invoked an obscure constitutional provision in order to name an additional eight Senators and ensure passage of the legislation.[84] By this time, the election of an NDP government in Ontario added another province to the opposition to the new tax measure.[85] As it had in 1988 on the FTA, the PCN found itself with Liberal Senators and provincial governments as allies.

A plan of action for the Campaign for Fair Taxes drafted by the PCN secretariat indicates that a flurry of initiatives focusing on the stacking of the Senate by the Tories was being considered. Some, like a series of print ads, came to fruition, while others, including a CUPE proposal to travel to London to appeal the appointment of additional Senators to the Queen, died on the drawing board.[86]

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[83] Jeff Rose, Letter to Shirley Carr, President, Canadian Labour Congress, 19 March 1990.

[84] "Chrétien Urges Election on GST," *Toronto Star*, 3 October 1990, A1.

[85] "Rae calls on Senate to kill Tories GST," *Toronto Star*, 22 September 1990, A8.

[86] Campaign for Fair Taxes, "Fall Plan of Action (Draft)," August 1990; PCN, News Release, "Network Supports Senate Committee Recommendations on GST," Ottawa, 26 September 1990; Mike McBane, Memorandum to Member Organizations, 28 September 1990; Mike McBane, Memorandum to Member Organizations, 26 September 1990; Mike McBane, Memorandum to Provincial Coalitions, 21 September 1990; McBane, Interview by author.

Meanwhile, the GST campaign continued to inspire grassroots activism including symbolic local M.P. recall campaigns and city council resolutions opposing the tax, culminating in a Day of Action on 10 November. The campaign was also viewed as an opportunity to build alliances with small business groups; a tactic that met with some success in specific regions.[87]

In the period following the 1988 federal election, the Pro-Canada Network built on its original mandate opposing the FTA to develop a broader range of engagement of which the campaign against the GST was the most prominent example. The transition from single-issue coalition to taking on a whole range of social and economic policy initiatives defined as part of the Tory/corporate agenda was relatively smooth. Conjunctural factors including aggressive advocacy of neo-liberal policies by the corporate sector, their implementation by a re-elected – yet quickly very unpopular – Mulroney government, and the onset of recession in 1990, all contributed to the apparent ease of this transformation. While much of the Network's attention and activity were focused on new issues like the GST, free trade remained the reason for its existence. During the period covered by the following chapter, free trade will re-emerge at the centre of public debate and return to the heart of the PCN's activities.

CUPE's strong support for the GST campaign is made clear in correspondence from the unions two top leaders to all its locals. Jeff Rose and Judy Darcy, Letter to All Chartered Organizations, 4 October 1990.

[87] On plans for the Day of Action, see "Putting the Pressure on the GST," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 5 November 1990. Relations with small business organizations were particularly strong in Alberta where various local Chambers of Commerce participated in the Campaign for Fair Taxes. Confirmed in Royer, Interview by author; see also the interview with the head of the Atlantic Coop, "GST Would Discriminate Against Co-ops," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 5 November 1990.

Chapter 6

Back to Free Trade

1. Introduction

While opposing the GST was at the top of the PCN's campaign agenda for most of 1990, there was a continuing and consistent focus on free trade which was still very much identified as the core issue for the Network. Like the GST, other new issues taken up by the Network were introduced, both in public pronouncements and in internal discussions, in terms of their relationship with the FTA.[1]

This chapter picks up the thread of the PCN's development as it continues to expand beyond its original objective and simultaneously returns to the source of its initial unity as the extension of the FTA to include Mexico comes onto the political agenda. It follows the Network chronologically through a period of continuing growth marked by its eventual renaming as the Action Canada Network in April 1991. As a broader mandate is consolidated through a series of campaigns including a notable intervention in the constitutional debate in 1991-92, the Network also returns to its roots with campaigns to abrogate the FTA and to oppose the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

The prospect of a continental trade deal leads to the Network's first transnational movement-to-movement relationships with Mexican and American opponents of free trade. These relationships, in particular with Mexican allies, contribute to an increasing emphasis on the promotion of alternatives thus shifting the Network's discourse on trade. Eventually, U.S. proposals for parallel accords on labour and the environment, put forward as a means to obtain Congressional sanction for NAFTA, bring latent tensions between the members of the new trilateral alliance to the surface.

While this chapter covers a period of increased activity by the Network, it also draws out some telltale signs of what, in retrospect, we know to have been an

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[1] Discussion of the impact of the federal budget is in Summary of Discussion and Major Decisions, PCN, Tenth Assembly, Vancouver, March 1990. There was discussion of the GST, regional development and the universality of social programs in this vein at the Eighth Assembly in Ottawa. PCN Eighth Assembly Summary. See also "New Tax to Replace Revenues Lost in FTA" and "Budget Begins FTA Harmonization."

impending decline for this phase of the Canadian popular sector coalition-building project. After reviewing the major mobilization organized by the ACN and its allies in the spring of 1993, the chapter concludes with the Network's second encounter with electoral politics that fall, providing a necessary contrast with the PCN's involvement in the 1988 campaign.

2. Trade goes Continental

Immediately after the 1988 election, PCN groups identified monitoring the anticipated impacts of free trade as a top priority.[2] In addition, two new trade fronts were rapidly opening up in 1989. First, as the Canada-U.S. FTA was implemented, American and Mexican trade representatives were already deep in discussions on yet another building block towards the Reagan-Bush vision of a hemispheric trade block – a U.S.-Mexico FTA. In early 1990, the Canadian government was on the verge of throwing its hat into the negotiation of a North America-wide FTA and, by the spring, informal discussions started between the three countries. Finally, in February 1991 the Canadian government confirmed that it would be a full participant in negotiations towards a North American Free Trade zone.[3] Second, the FTA signed by Canada and the U.S. included a mechanism for its abrogation or termination that had been flourished by proponents as a viable exit clause. After implementation of the FTA in January 1989, as the apparent toll of trade liberalization was tallied and the Liberal Party shifted away from its staunch opposition to the deal, abrogation edged onto the domestic political agenda.

In their assessment of the failure to defeat free trade at the polls in 1988, PCN member groups and critics alike identified the lack of significant alliances with

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[2] PCN Sixth Assembly Summary; this function was largely taken on by some member groups with the PCN secretariat using its limited resources to ensure that the information was shared with all member organizations (e.g. through the *Pro-Canada Dossier*). The CLC and some of its affiliates tracked job losses and plant closures and launched a new publication *CLC Trade Watch* which provided this information as did more substantive reports published by the CCPA. In addition to plant relocation and private sector job losses, the Network and its member groups identified social policy and public sector employment developments they believed were tied to free trade. See Chapter 5 above.

[3] Report by the House of Commons Committee on External Affairs and International Trade quoted in Campbell and Pal, *The Real Worlds of Canadian Politics; Cases in Process and Policy*

American organizations as a key lacuna in the anti-FTA strategy.[4] This critique assumed that latent American sympathy had remained untapped, or alternatively, that potential allies were repelled by Canadian nationalist and anti-American rhetoric. In reality, interest in and opposition to the free trade pact was limited in the United States, even in likely quarters. While the AFL-CIO was formally opposed to the FTA, its leadership did not play an active role, nor was there much concern with the deal among American workers in general.[5] Now, an emerging North American playing field challenged relative indifference to free trade in the U.S., and opened up a new axis for cross-national alliances for Canadians.

More broadly, discussions aimed at expanding free trade into a North American pact introduced a new dynamic for the Canadian popular sector, building, for example, on previous work in Latin America. In fact, Canadian social justice advocates "first encountered Mexico on the way to Central America." Canadian organizations like the Toronto-based Latin American Working Group (LAWG), the Interchurch Committee for Human Rights in Latin America (ICHRLA) and many others were deeply involved in solidarity and refugee support work in Central America through the 1970s and 1980s. As part of this work, they developed contacts and relationships in Mexico where refugees, as well as the headquarters for most Central American opposition and revolutionary groups, were located. Canadians also built relationships with Mexican groups including the left-wing of the ruling Mexican Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).[6] Later, in the aftermath of the 1989 federal

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[4] See Chapter 2 above.

[5] "The American Labour movement, while formally opposed to the deal, was only mildly concerned by it." Ian Robinson, "NAFTA, Social Unionism, and Labour Movement Power in Canada and the United States," *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations* 49, no. 4 (1994): 677. In a report on a visit to Washington early in 1988, John Foster notes that even where there was concern or interest in the FTA this was quite narrow in scope: "Americans by and large are not aware of the social implications of the deal... the deal is usually wrapped in the glad-bag of 'free trade,' i.e., trade only...contact was made with groups including economic advisors to candidate Jesse Jackson." John Foster, "Brief Report on Fact Finding Visit to Washington, February 21-26, 1988," 19 March 1988. During a previous trip to Washington in July 1987, with CAFT co-chair Marjorie Cohen and future PCN chair Tony Clarke, John Foster had concluded that when it came to free trade in the United States, you could "get the critical voices into a telephone booth." Clarke recalls numerous attempts to strike up relationships with US-based groups through a variety of connections but development of "mutual understanding." Foster, Interview by author; Tony Clarke, Interview by author, Ottawa 1997; Cohen, Interview by author.

[6] Foster, Interview by author. Valin and Sinclair describe the development of solidarity projects

budget, the international development NGOs like Oxfam and Interpares that gravitated to the PCN also brought with them knowledge and ties to the region. Together, these organizations fed a seasoned understanding of Latin American political economy, and the various forces at play in the region, into the Canadian anti-free trade movement.

Within the labour movement, institutional relationships between Canadian and Mexican unions were a mixed bag. The CLC had maintained a civil relationship with the Confederation of Workers of Mexico (CTM), its Mexican counterpart in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). As Mexico's official trade union central directly affiliated to the ruling PRI, the CTM was staunchly pro-free trade as well as implicated in the anti-democratic abuses of the regime. This formal institutional relationship made the early stages of Canada-Mexico relationship building difficult to navigate for the CLC and its affiliates. In contrast, the Québec-based CSN had a strong longstanding working relationship with an independent Mexican trade union central, the Authentic Labour Front (FAT), based on their common membership in the International Confederation of Catholic Trade Unions.[7]

Given these connections, the Pro-Canada Network's eventual engagement with trilateral free trade was not very surprising. In addition to a wide range of sectoral connections, it was facilitated by a keen interest in Mexico from the earliest days of the anti-FTA movement. For example, in the mid-1980s a series of seminars with Mexican economist Adolfo Aguilar Zinser were hosted and attended by many of the key players in the, then embryonic, CAFT. Later, in November 1987, author John Ralston Saul's presentation to the parliamentary committee studying free trade on behalf of the Toronto group drew attention to the emerging Maquiladora free trade zone on the Mexican border with the U.S.[8] Finally, on the eve of the federal election

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between Canada and Latin America in Fern Valin and Jim Sinclair, "Solidarity, Not Competition," in *Crossing the Line*, ed. Jim Sinclair (Vancouver: New Star, 1992).

[7] On trade unionism in Mexico, see Alejandro Alvarez and Gabriel Mendoza, "Mexico: Neo-liberal Disaster Zone," in *Crossing the Line*, ed. Jim Sinclair (Vancouver: New Star, 1992) and Jack Warnock, "Workers' and Union Rights Brutally Repressed in Mexico," *ACN Dossier*, December 1992.

[8] Saul's presentation was published as John Saul, "A Gaping Hole in Free Trade," *Globe and Mail*, 25 November 1987, A7.

in September of 1988, GATT-Fly led a fact finding visit to the Maquiladoras.[9] The potential impact of the Mexican free trade zones was made very real only weeks later when the 'runaway plant' syndrome first hit Canada. On 4 October, the Fleck auto parts plant located near London, Ontario was dismantled, loaded on a convoy of trucks and shipped south to Mexico at the cost of two hundred jobs.[10]

The GATT-Fly visit to the Maquiladoras followed by the Fleck incident laid the groundwork for a surge in interest in the continental angle on free trade in the aftermath of the Tory election victory in November. The general feeling among Canadians active on the Mexican file was that North American free trade would follow within ten years of the FTA. This notional timeline, and an enthusiasm borne of the sense of some element of victory that coloured the electoral defeat on the FTA, were the driving forces behind the formation of the Common Frontiers project in mid-1989.[11] Common Frontiers was launched by LAWG, one other Central American solidarity organization – the B.C-based Trade Union Group (TUG) – and GATT-Fly, and attracted the energies of many CAFT veterans. Former CAFT co-chair John Foster was a driving force behind the new initiative and CAFT coordinator Scott Sinclair moved over to staff the new project. Ken Traynor, Sinclair's co-worker at CAFT would take over at Common Frontiers in the summer of 1990.[12]

In October 1990, Common Frontiers led a delegation of thirty representatives from PCN member groups to Mexico for what was billed as the Mexico-Canada Encuentro: Social Organizations Facing Free Trade. Some of the Canadian organizers felt they had gone out on a long limb with this initiative and expressed relief and satisfaction when more than sixty representatives of Mexican groups attended. The Encuentro laid the basis for an ongoing bilateral relationship and sowed the seeds for

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[9] "Growth of Export Processing Zones Threatens Canada and Mexico," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 4 October 1988.

[10] "Free Trade Advisor Closes Plant - Sends Jobs to Mexico," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 27 October 1988.

[11] Foster, Interview by author and Ken Traynor, Interview by author, By telephone, 5 April 1997.

[12] Foster, Interview by author; Traynor, Interview by author; and Sandra Sorenson, Interview by author, Ottawa, 7 November 1997.

what would eventually become the PCN's Mexican *vis-à-vis*, the Mexican Free Trade Action Network *(Red Mexicana de Accion frente al Libre Commercio).*[13]

The Mexican Encuentro concluded with the release of a statement listing a series of commitments: first, the Canadians agreed to pursue cancellation of the FTA and to develop an alternative economic strategy that would both protect sovereignty and "allow integral national development." Second, the Mexicans committed to develop a broad national consensus to block a Mexico-U.S. FTA and to "provoke a national discussion concerning the development model we want to pursue." Finally, both parties agreed to provide "mutual assistance and to sharing our experiences" in particular through the creation of a "permanent binational commission."[14] One week later, the PCN Assembly in Ottawa adopted an action plan on Mexico-U.S. free trade reflecting the agreements reached in Mexico.[15]

In retrospect, the success of the Encuentro reflected the mutual trust that flowed from previous personal and organizational relationships and augured well for the future of Common Frontiers. For its Canadian organizers, the Encuentro was an important step in building a broader continental and trilateral relationship around free trade. Taking the first step in Mexico reflected both the experience of American indifference in the campaign against bilateral free trade and a vision of "jumping over the U.S. – the beast in the middle" to first build alliances in a society that also shared a border with the world's economic superpower.[16]

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[13] Foster, Interview by author; Traynor, Interview by author; Clarke, Interview by author. On RMALC which was formally launched in April 1991, see Fronteras Commune/CECOPE, "Fighting Free Trade Mexican Style," in *Crossing the Line*, ed. Jim Sinclair (Vancouver: New Star, 1992), 137. RMALC paralleled the PCN/ACN in structure, indeed its founders looked to the Canadian Network as something of a model. See, for example, Drew Fagan, "NAFTA Fight Draws on Canadian Experience: American, Mexican Anti-Free Trade Coalitions Look North for Ammunition, Inspiration," *Globe and Mail*, 15 February 1993, B1.

[14] "Final Declaration of the Mexico-Canada Encuentro: Social Organizations Facing Free Trade," Mexico City, 5-7 October 1990; see also Canada Mexico Encuentro, List of Canadian Participants, October 1990; Canada -Mexico Encuentro, Resources/Environment Workshop Report; Social Organizations Workshop Report; Labour Union Workshop Report; Final Declaration; PCN files.

[15] PCN, "US-Mexico FTA Follow-up Actions," Assembly Document, Ottawa, 12-14 October 1990.

[16] Sorenson, Interview by author.

Only months after the Mexican Encuentro, in January 1991 PCN representatives met with key environmental and labour groups in Washington, D.C., a meeting that is considered to mark the start of the second component of the trilateral relationship.[17] Personal relationships and contacts were once again essential in lining up a delegation of twenty prominent environmental activists and trade analysts for the meeting in the Washington office of the NGO Development Gap on Martin Luther King Day.[18]

Under the auspices of Common Frontiers, contact with Mexican community and labour groups expanded rapidly through 1989 and 1990. Common Frontiers built on a model first developed by LAWG in its Central American work where it had facilitated trips by Canadian trade unionists to the region. Now leaders and activists from PCN member groups were being exposed to the realities of life and political engagement in Mexico. As far as the Network's political action coordinator from 1990 to 1993 is concerned, these experiences cemented the commitment of many activists to the trade fight.[19] The impact of exposure to Mexico was also important for many top movement leaders. For example, Council of Canadians chair Maude Barlow was emotionally battered by her first visit to the Mexican border region during this period. She credits the experience with helping to reshape her political analysis.[20]

While Canadians visiting Mexico were keen to learn, they also viewed their role as warning their hosts based on their experience with the FTA. As one said: "We were the canaries in the coal mine. We were saying be warned before this happens to you."[21] Beyond facilitating these exchanges, Common Frontiers played a key role in

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[17] Foster, Interview by author and Traynor, Interview by author.

[18] Mark Ritchie, "Fighting Free Trade U.S. Style," in *Crossing the Line*, ed. Jim Sinclair (Vancouver: New Star, 1992); Clarke, Interview by author; Foster, Interview by author; Traynor, Interview by author. Ritchie and Stephen Shrybman counsel for the Toronto-based Canadian Environmental Law Association are credited with providing the impetus for this particular meeting.

[19] Michael McBane, Interview by author, Ottawa, 15 November 1997.

[20] Barlow, *The Fight of My Life: Confessions of an Unrepentant Canadian*, 123-30; Personal interview with Maude Barlow. One key Common Frontiers organizer argues that the strong linkages built between Canadian and Mexican activists contributed to the less xenophobic response to NAFTA by Canadian workers than that of their US counterparts. Foster, Interview by author.

[21] Foster, Interview by author.

tracking trade-related developments in the United States. Based on their FTA experience, some Toronto CAFT veterans felt this critical piece of the strategy should not be overlooked. The gathering of intelligence in Washington went hand-in-hand with the process of knitting together the other connection of the trilateral relationship.[22]

Given the two core functions described above, it is not surprising that Common Frontiers came to define its status as something of a "foreign affairs department" for the Pro-Canada Network. As the coordinator of the project at the time describes it: "While the PCN delivered the Canadian project, we developed the international work and reported back to the member groups."[23]

Beyond reinvigorating the Canadian anti-free trade forces and attracting some new players to the PCN table, engagement with Mexico buttressed the determination to promote alternatives to trade liberalization. This resolve is reflected both in internal and public Network and Common Frontiers materials from this period.[24] Beyond their own sense that the failure to push alternatives had been a major weakness of their efforts in 1988, PCN activists were also influenced by the predisposition of their Québecois colleagues and the explicit needs of their newfound Mexican allies. Québec organizations committed to opposing the FTA had from the outset emphasized detailed policy critique over broad-stroke cultural and economic nationalist arguments regarding trade liberalization. From this perspective, the elaboration of policy alternatives was quite simply the other shoe dropping.

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[22] Ibid. and Traynor, Interview by author. For details of US groups such as Development Gap, Public Citizen, Institute for Policy Studies and others engaged on the trade issue, see Ritchie, "Fighting Free Trade U.S. Style" and Robinson, "NAFTA, Social Unionism, and Labour Movement Power in Canada and the United States."

[23] Foster, Interview by author and Traynor, Interview by author.

[24] Agenda items for a Common Frontiers meeting on 11 January 1990 included: "Rethinking development: after free trade what?"; "Finding common ground: developing a continental approach of our own"; and "Redesigning our options: developing alternatives to Free Trade." See, as well, articles in the *Pro-Canada Dossier*, January –February 1991, including "Development and Trade for Healthy Economies," "Towards a Just World Trading System," "An African Alternative: Down-to-Earth Growth."

Mexican anti-free trade activists were dealing with a society at a different stage of social and economic development and, consequently, engaged in a debate on very different terms. The spectre of job losses was both real and a powerful tool for free trade opponents in Canada's advanced capitalist economy. In Mexico, free trade advocates were brandishing the prospect of production shifting southward as a boon for domestic employment. In addition, the stakes for Mexicans opposing free trade were very high since they faced repression and possible reprisals for their stance.[25] For them, the ability to counterpose alternatives to the pact being promoted by the three North American governments was nothing short of essential for political legitimacy, even survival. This was particularly the case for the country's most prominent free trade critic, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas. The son of a former PRI president of the Republic, and himself a one-time PRI official, Cardenas was widely viewed as the real victor of the 1988 Presidential election when he ran as leader of the newly formed Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).[26]

The Canadian connection with Cardenas was quite strong. In fact, relationships between members of his inner circle and Common Frontiers facilitated a series of visits by Cardenas to Canada in 1991. After a speech to the convention of the B.C. Federation of Labour in January, he addressed a roundtable of Network groups in Ottawa in April. In both cases, Cardenas put forward an alternative pact that he described as follows:

> What we are proposing is a more ambitious agreement, wider in its scope, broader in its social consensus and therefore much more lasting in time...If we make this effort and build this trilateral consensus, our countries will have the opportunity to decide their future and build a common destiny, not on the basis of a forces agreement being promoted by narrow corporate and political interests, but on the basis of our true needs.[27]

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[25] Warnock, "Workers' and Union Rights Brutally Repressed in Mexico."

[26] Fraud in Mexican elections in the late 1980s and early 1990s is described in Vikram K. Chand, *Mexico's Political Awakening* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 47-50. Specifically, Chand notes "in 1994, the director of the Federal Election Institute disclosed that the Interior Ministry had decided suspend the count in 1988 because of the panic caused by early urban returns that indicated that Cardenas was winning the presidential race." Chand, *Mexico's Political Awakening*, 49. For an interesting eyewitness account of electoral fraud in 1988 by an IT technician involved in the tabulation of results, see J. Sanders, "Mexico: IT Worker Speaks Out," *Computing*, 7 July 1994.

[27] Cardenas speech to a roundtable of ACN groups in Ottawa reported in "Development Pact would be

The sentiment underlying the model promoted by Cardenas is made explicit in a document describing the PRD's position on trade and development:

> The PRD is in no way opposed to the principle of international interdependence... We are in favour of a broad trade and development pact. We want Mexican markets to function. We are in favour of greater and more equitable competition, both in Mexico and between Mexico and the rest of the world.[28]

The message put forward by Cardenas is an important example of the dialogue on programme and strategy the Pro-Canada Network and its new Mexican allies were engaged in from the Mexico City Encuentro onward. The move to a trinational playing field put the Canadian cross-sectoral coalition model in the spotlight. The PCN served as something of an inspiration for the formation of the Mexican Action Network and, to a lesser extent, informed coalition-building efforts in the United States.[29] The new transnational relationship with Mexican groups also influenced the Canadian Network's own development. For example, it accentuated the emphasis placed on alternatives, as reflected in this statement by a leading Network actor: "Our opposition is no longer good enough. We have to be able to say more than 'we told you so.' We have to give leadership on what the alternatives are."[30] As we will see below, the new Canada/Mexico relationship would also influence the changing structure of the PCN culminating in its relaunch as the ACN in April 1991, and reinforce the position of Québec-based member groups.

"More Ambitious" than Free Trade: PRD Leader," *ACN Dossier*, May-June 1991; Text of Cardenas speech to BC Federation of Labour Convention, November 30, 1990 is excerpted in "Our Goal is to Join Forces with you," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, January-February 1991.

[28] [PRD], "The PRD is in Favor of a Continental Trade and Development Agreement," Mimeo translated from Spanish original, 1991; see also PCN, "US-Mexico FTA Follow-up Actions" and list of eight "US - Mexico follow-up actions" which emphasizes solidarity with Mexican counterparts and further exchanges in PCN Tenth Assembly Summary.

[29] Fagan, "NAFTA Fight Draws on Canadian Experience: American, Mexican Anti-Free Trade Coalitions Look North for Ammunition, Inspiration."

[30] Sandra Sorenson, Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives quoted in Jim Sinclair, ed., *Crossing the Line* (Vancouver: New Star, 1992), 187. The focus on alternatives is evident in the January – February 1991 issue of the *Pro-Canada Dossier*. Another Network leader expresses the view that budding organizational and personal contact with Mexico, particularly under the aegis of Common Frontiers, might have contributed to a less xenophobic response to the prospect of free trade with Mexico than was exhibited by the Canadians' neighbours to the south. Foster, Interview by author.

As the relationship between Canadian, Mexican and U.S. movements grew from 1991 to 1993, the Common Frontiers project became an increasingly central component of the PCN's activities. Over time, some important member groups, the CAW and USWA for example, shifted from their initial roles as funders and clients of Common Frontiers to become full-fledged participants in the project's decision-making process by taking seats on its steering committee.[31] Trade union involvement in Common Frontiers was partly driven by the opportunity the project afforded to bypass the CLC's notoriously conservative international affairs department which had previously determined what international work would be undertaken on behalf of all affiliated unions.[32]

3. Abrogation

While the opening up of a new front in the free trade battle created new and more complex relationships, it also renewed and amplified the attention paid to the Canada-U.S. FTA. From the outset of the debate on free trade, proponents wielded Section 2106 of the proposed pact, which allowed for termination on six months notice, as a safety blanket to comfort Canadians wary of joining them for a "leap of faith." Opponents had derided the cancellation or abrogation option as, first, a poor alternative to rejecting a flawed pact and, second, a suicidal choice for the junior and highly dependent partner in a trading relationship. In the immediate aftermath of the 1988 election, discussion of abrogation was limited to hopeful speculation by shell-shocked FTA opponents. If anything, the longer-term prospect of campaigning for abrogation might have served as motivation for a more immediate task taken on by

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[31] As Common Frontiers outgrew its initial parent organization LAWG it also developed into a continentally oriented reflection of the PCN. Increasingly, the same groups sat at the two tables and the respective programs advanced in tandem. While the Common Frontiers model was clearly inspired and timely, it is worth considering whether the shifting of the nexus for campaigning on trade issues away from the Network table might have had a negative impact on the latter over the longer term. This conclusion would not be without irony given the seriousness with which Common Frontiers treated both representation and accountability at the PCN table. See Common Frontiers reports to PCN/ACN Assemblies in PCN/ACN files.

[32] Traynor, Interview by author. Valin and Sinclair describe how the CLC's refusal to link up with Nicaragua's Sandinistas and other progressive movements around the world provided impetus to a variety of alternative projects (e.g. LAWG, Trade Union Group, and others) in Valin and Sinclair, "Solidarity, Not Competition."

the Pro-Canada Network – monitoring the impact of the FTA.[33] While abrogation appeared on the agenda of the first PCN Assembly after the coming into force of the FTA in March 1989, substantive discussion would only begin close to eighteen months later, with special meetings convened in March and July 1990. Through this process, the PCN became committed to developing a national campaign calling for abrogation and to "take responsibility for keeping abrogation of the FTA on the political agenda," a position that was reconfirmed at the Mexico City Encuentro in October 1990.[34] In addition, the Network was urged to support specific groups – e.g. aboriginal peoples – willing to "openly defy provisions of the FTA" and "influence provincial governments to adopt measures which would directly challenge the FTA."[35] The Action Plan adopted by the ACN in May 1991 went a step further and put "forcing an early election on abrogation of the Free Trade deal and alternative economic, social and political priorities" high on the agenda.[36]

Despite prominent mention in Network planning documents during 1990 and 1991, abrogation was largely overshadowed by the trinational agenda. Enthusiasm for abrogation as a PCN campaign priority grew in inverse proportion to the federal Liberal Party's move away from its own commitment to cancel the FTA. With passing time, as the tally of job losses and other social and economic impacts attributed by them to the FTA grew, opponents felt the prospects for a successful public campaign for abrogation were improving.[37]

The election of Jean Chrétien to replace John Turner as leader soon after the federal election marked the first step in the Liberal Party's retreat on free trade. In turn, Chrétien would name Roy MacLaren, a free trade enthusiast, as the party's trade critic. The importance of pressing for abrogation was confirmed by a PCN meeting

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[33] See Chapter 5 above.

[34] See above.

[35] Geoff Bickerton, "Report on the PCN Special Meeting on FTA Abrogation Strategy," Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Ottawa, 13 June 1990.

[36] ACN, "1991 Action Plan," May 1991.

[37] Virginia Galt, "461,000 Jobs Lost, Report Says: Economist Cites Free-trade Pact for Manufacturing Slump," *Globe and Mail*, 30 January 1992, A3.

with the federal Liberal caucus. Notes from that meeting circulated to member organizations highlight the new Liberal leader's superficial and lukewarm enthusiasm for another pitched battle on free trade. Perhaps more ominously, the document quotes MacLaren as stating that "three-way negotiations on continental deal would be very different from the FTA," and more explicitly, "If I were minister of trade I'd see this as an unique opportunity."[38]

The last embers of the anti-free trade fire that characterized the Liberal Party's electoral efforts in 1988 were extinguished at Aylmer, Québec in November 1991. A discussion paper, drafted by MacLaren, entitled "Wide Open" framed the trade policy discussion at the party's annual policy conference. True to its title, MacLaren's paper was an unapologetic paean to trade liberalization arguing that the "free-trade pact with the U.S. is a done deal and the next logical step is to dismantle all trade barriers." The Liberal leader summed up his own conclusions after Aylmer as follows: "At this conference we have learned that the old concepts of Right and Left do not apply to the world of today and tomorrow... Protectionism is not right-wing or left-wing. It is simply passé."[39] In February 1992, the federal Liberal convention formally shifted the party's trade position from support for abrogation to endorsing a loosely defined process of "renegotiation" of the pact. In an opinion drafted for the Council of Canadians, former Canadian ambassador to the GATT Mel Clark laid out a blistering critique of the new Liberal stance. Clark considered renegotiation a "mirage that ignored the reality of the enormous power the U.S. possesses in bilateral negotiations

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[38] Randy Robinson, "Notes of PCN Meeting with Liberal Leadership," Pro-Canada Network, 25 September 1990. Further signs of the Liberals slide away from FTA abrogation are reported in the *Pro-Canada Dossier* over the next year. See, for example, "Liberals Backing Away from Stance on Abrogation," *ACN Dossier*, September - October 1991. The Liberals shifting stance on free trade was foreshadowed by the race for the party leadership. Generally recognized as the leading voice of the 'left' within the party, Lloyd Axworthy withdrew from the race blaming his inability to raise sufficient financial support. See "Pick Leader Who'll Scrap FTA," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 2 March 1990. On Axworthy's failure to seek the Liberal leadership, see Maude Barlow and Bruce Campbell, *Straight Through the Heart* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1995), 106-07.

[39] Hugh Winsor, "What Does Liberal Mean?" *Globe and Mail*, 23 November 1991, A1; Chrétien quoted in Hugh Winsor, "Liberal Conference Tests Icy Economic Waters," *Globe and Mail*, 26 November 1991, A1. On the Aylmer conference and the Liberal Party's shift on free trade, see Edward Greenspon and Anthony Wilson Smith, *Double Vision: The Inside Story of the Liberals in Power* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1996) and Barlow, *The Fight of My Life: Confessions of an Unrepentant Canadian*, 151.

with Canada" as well as going counter to the "experience and wisdom of successive governments from King to Trudeau."[40]

Reacting to the Liberals about face and emboldened by opinions such as Clark's, the ACN reconfirmed its own commitment to abrogation. In March 1992, the PCN Assembly adopted the following statement:

> That the ACN bring forward a program for national recovery and development as an alternative to the bankrupt corporate policies that have been forced upon us in the last decade. It must be made clear from the outset that cancelling the FTA is key to opening the door for alternative policies. As long as the FTA remains in place our governments are prevented from implementing the social, economic, environmental and cultural policies necessary for recovery and development.[41]

The March Assembly marked a period where the importance of abrogation as an election issue was highlighted and promoted within the Network and in public. Enthusiasm for abrogation as an issue was greatest at the core of the PCN's leadership – egged on by a strong commitment from the Council of Canadians. Council chair Maude Barlow toured the country with her new book *Take Back the Nation* in 1991 promoting abrogation. In a report entitled *Abrogation for the Nation* published by the CCPA, Barlow's co-author Bruce Campbell argued that "[t]he abrogation of the Canada-U.S. FTA is the pivotal issue on which the election and the future of Canada – will be decided."[42] In a covering memorandum to member organizations accompanying a long promised working paper on abrogation, Network chair Tony Clarke struck a similar note: "this (abrogation) will certainly be a major issue in the forthcoming federal election."[43]

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[40] Mel G. Clark, Memorandum to Maude Barlow, 16 February 1990. For a discussion of renegotiation and termination, see Duncan Cameron, "Renegotiation and Termination," in *Canada Under Free Trade*, ed. Duncan Cameron and Mel Watkins (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1992). In a letter to Chrétien dated May 15, 1992, Mel Hurtig pointedly presses the Liberal leader to explain the concept of 'renegotiation.' Mel Hurtig, Letter to Hon. Jean Chrétien, 15 May 1992.

[41] Summary of Discussion and Major Decisions, ACN, Seventeenth Assembly, Ottawa, March 1992. Also, "It's Time to Scrap the FTA: ACN," *ACN Dossier*, March-April 1992.

[42] Maude Barlow, Interview by author, Ottawa, 17 March 1997; Bruce Campbell, *Abrogation to Rebuild the Nation* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 1992).

[43] Tony Clarke, Memorandum to Member Organizations, 13 May 1992; see also "Cancelling the free trade deal: an ACN position paper," an undated draft attached to the above memorandum.

While there was official unanimity among ACN member groups on the commitment to abrogation, perceptions of its importance and realism as an objective, and consequently the level of commitment, varied quite widely.[44] For some, the abrogation stance was necessary as the Canadian contribution to the broader continent-wide battle to defeat NAFTA; for others, it might be considered a "position of legal necessity rather than of political opportunity."[45] Even those espousing abrogation as a strategic priority were very clear that it did not constitute a standalone objective. Sandra Sorenson, executive director of the CCPA, argued that "free trade is like a contagious disease – malaria say or smallpox. If you ask me, what's the alternative to this disease? I would say, first of all, to get rid of it. But that on its own isn't enough."[46] The lead article in the first post-1988 election issue of the *Pro-Canada Dossier* anticipated this perspective when it accompanied a call for rigorous monitoring of the damage caused by the FTA with the following admonition:

> Any move to terminate the agreement in the years ahead will have to show that there are alternatives to greater integration with the U.S.[47]

While abrogation was a strategic consideration from the moment the FTA was implemented, the PCN's commitment to this objective came as part of the new trinational opposition to free trade. This dynamic also influenced the nature of the Canadian campaign for abrogation. More broadly, the Network's programme and structure were also affected. For example, the emphasis on promoting alternatives to liberalized trade as a development strategy was reinforced. Finally, work with Mexican allies in particular added to the pressure to reconsider the Pro-Canada Network's name and organizational structure. It is to this process that we now turn.

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[44] Informally, organizational leaders including some from major trade unions expressed their doubts about abrogation (evidence from personal interviews). Records from the planning process for the major pre-election mobilization on Parliament Hill on May 15, 1993 in the minutes of ACN Campaign Strategy Committee meetings for January – April 1993 indicate that these doubts persisted. ACN files.

[45] Foster, Interview by author and Sorenson, Interview by author.

[46] Quoted in "Development and Trade for Healthy Economies," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, January - February 1991.

[47] "The Struggle Enters a New Phase."

4. Dealing with the 'National Question': The Action Canada Network

The Pro-Canada Network had, by its very nature, been obliged to deal with the fundamental national cleavage at the heart of Canadian identity. From its inception, the Network's founders were committed to including popular sector groups from Québec within its process. Difficult at the best of times, this accommodation was all the more so due to the nature of the free trade issue. The revitalized Canadian nationalism of free trade opponents outside Québec – at least partially rooted in the trade, investment and cultural nationalism of the 1970s – contrasted sharply with the approach taken by the Coalition québecoise en opposition au libre-échange and other FTA opponents in Québec. As the PCN discovered, mobilizing progressive nationalist opinion in a 'binational' state while avoiding internal antagonism is no simple task.[48]

As Council of Canadians co-chair, John Trent recalls discussions around the Canada Summit as clearly taking into consideration the distinct organizational and thematic concerns and needs of Québec groups. In his recollection, they went even further, to the point of "inventing the idea that there would be two coalitions, there would be the Québec coalition and a Canadian network." Québec participants were not enthused by the name chosen for the new pan-Canadian body; it is not clear whether their eventual acceptance stemmed from a lack of alternatives, as suggested by some participants in the meeting, or following John Trent's account, a more profound sense that they would in any case be working as a separate Québec-based coalition.[49]

Concern with the name was more than semantic since the moniker 'Pro-Canada' had been used by the federalist No side in the 1980 referendum on sovereignty while most leading anti-free trade organizations in Québec were pro-sovereignty. The issue was never far from the surface for the PCN and was again raised immediately following the 1988 election. At the Network's Sixth Assembly, representatives of the Coalition québecoise noted the problems the name caused in

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[48] On the inclusion of Québec groups at the outset, see Chapter 4 above.

[49] Trent, Interview by author.

Québec and called for a re-evaluation. While some Canadian groups expressed support for this position others opposed it. Reasons ranged from the fear that a change in name would be seen as implying a specific position on the issue of national unity (Canadian Teachers Federation) to the concern that a hard-won organizational identity would be lost (Council of Canadians, Canadian Labour Congress).[50]

Since tying opposition to the trade deal to nationalist sentiments in the fashion of their counterparts elsewhere in Canada was not an option, FTA opponents in Québec focused almost exclusively on in-depth sector-by-sector analysis of the projected impact of a bilateral trade agreement. FTA opponents nationwide considered their work very useful.[51]

Given its limited resources, the Network developed a relatively successful working relationship on this level for the duration of the pre-election and election periods. Bilingualism became a requirement for staff and some attention was paid to the special requirements of Québec-based member groups. This included a concerted effort to include at least one spokesperson from Québec in all Network public events and to make all documents available in both official languages.[52] Exceptions to this positive working relationship pointed to underlying tensions.

Perhaps the most prominent example involved the cartoon booklet. Produced for the Network by the Coalition against Free Trade, it had been written and illustrated by two Anglophones and its content – text, illustrations and overall tone – depended heavily on Canadian nationalist themes and a corollary humour that held little relevance in Québec. Nevertheless, many of the financial backers of the endeavour were committed by their own organizational rules to distribute documents to their membership in both official languages.[53] The quandary facing the Network

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[50] PCN Sixth Assembly Summary.

[51] Vézina, "La Campagne d'opposition au libre-échange: bilan et perspectives"; Cameron, Interview by author.

[52] PCN, "Report and Recommendations of the Québec-Canada Task Force," Pro-Canada Network, 12-14 October 1990.

[53] This was a constitutional obligation for many national unions.

reflected the fundamental dilemma at the heart of Canadian identity. As a pan-Canadian formation, the PCN hoped to develop a discourse that could appeal to all citizens from coast-to-coast including, of course, francophone Canadians both inside and outside Québec.

By the time the cartoon booklet was ready to go to press in September 1988, plans to develop an alternative Québec-oriented French language document product were unfulfilled. Moreover, there was little enthusiasm for such a project as was evident when it was mooted at the Network's August pre-election Assembly.[54] At the last possible moment, in order to meet the requirements of some national organizations, the booklet was translated, adapted and produced in French. While some groups used it internally, the bulk of the print run was warehoused by embarrassed Québec member groups and destroyed after the election.[55]

Despite this and other hiccups, until Election Day in 1988 the FTA provided sufficient justification for a simple accommodation between differing English Canadian and Québecois discourses. With all eyes on the common objective of defeating the Conservative government and stopping the trade deal, it was generally understood, if grudgingly by some, that the two distinct approaches were essential. With the electoral results, the subsequent implementation of the FTA, and the broadening of the Pro-Canada Network's agenda, this perspective began to change.

When Québec voted massively for the Progressive Conservative Party and consequently – purposefully or not – for free trade, some analysts, in the manner of a spurned suitor, viewed it as much as a vote 'against Canada' as anything else.[56] But, the coming gradual decoupling of the Canadian and Québecois popular sector agendas was more a result of an inward turn on the part of the Québecois movement caught up

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[54] Fourth Assembly Minutes.

[55] Peter Bakvis, Letter to Peter Bleyer, 4 November 1988; Clarke, Interview by author; Traynor, Interview by author.

[56] See Reg Whitaker, "No Lament for the Nation: Free Trade and the Election of 1988," *Canadian Forum*, March 1989 and Phil Resnick, *Letters to a Québecois Friend* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 1990). This theme is dealt with in Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: the Politics of Canadian Nationalism*, 163 and McNally, "Beyond Nationalism, Beyond Protectionism: Labour and the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement," 241.

with resurgent nationalism than a negative reaction from Canadian counterparts to the electoral results. The leadership of Québec's trade unions and community sector organizations were now shifting most of their energy and resources into their own revivified battle for sovereignty.[57]

Repatriation of the Canadian constitution in 1982 had taken place without the consent of the government of Québec kicking off a period of intense conflict between the Trudeau Liberal government and the sovereigntist Parti Québecois provincial government. Three years later, a Liberal government was returned in Québec. Meanwhile, Brian Mulroney's federal electoral success in 1984 was built, in large part, on a combination of support from the two disaffected regions of the Trudeau era, the West and Québec. Mulroney made national reconciliation a centrepiece of his government's agenda and initiated negotiations with the provinces that culminated in the signing of the Meech Lake Accord in 1987.

The Accord's primary objective was to satisfy the core demands of the Québec government to ensure that province's inclusion in the constitutional framework. These demands included limits to the federal spending power in shared-cost programs, a veto over constitutional amendments affecting Québec, and recognition of Québec as a "distinct society." The parties agreed to a three-year timeline for ratification by all jurisdictions.[58] While Meech Lake was largely eclipsed by the national debate on the FTA in 1988, it returned to the forefront in 1989 and, after a series of dramatic reversals, failed to be ratified by the June 1990 deadline set in the original agreement.[59]

As the Meech Accord returned to centre stage and started to unravel, Québec participation in the PCN dwindled. Québec-based groups were infrequent attendees at Network assemblies and steering committee meetings and there were often no Québec

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[57] PCN Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Assembly Summaries; confirmed in personal interviews.

[58] The initial First Minister's meeting regarding the Meech Lake Accord was held at Meech Lake, Québec on April 30, 1987. The second was held in Ottawa on June 3, 1987. On Meech Lake, see McBride and Shields, *Dismantling a Nation: Canada and the New World Order*, 94.

[59] Introduction to Duncan Cameron and Miriam Smith, eds., *Constitutional Politics* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1992).

spokespersons available for public events. While they recognized that the neo-conservative agenda they opposed was continuing to be driven forward at the federal level, Québec groups nonetheless paid less and less attention to the PCN.[60] Still, representatives of Québec-based organizations raised the thorny issue of the Network's name again at a September 1989 Steering Committee meeting and a full discussion of the issue was put on the agenda for the October 1989 Assembly. Based on decisions at this Assembly, member groups were surveyed on three options: maintaining the current name, or adopting one of two new names, Canadian Social Justice Network or Solidarity Network Canada. Responses to the survey were deemed "inconclusive."[61]

In the spring of 1990, the Campaign for Fair Taxes included an explicit attempt to improve Québec participation in the Network's activities. A representative of the Québec coalition was made co-chair of the campaign and there were efforts to coordinate activities in Québec with work elsewhere. Unfortunately, problems with the decision-making process and the production of materials afflicted the campaign and, in the final analysis, it would become another focal point for criticism from Québec groups rather than a step towards a new and more positive relationship.[62]

Against the background of Meech Lake, grievances around the Campaign for Fair Taxes were the final prod to a systematic examination of Québec/Canada relations within the Network. Many issues, including the Network's choice of name, had been put aside in the heat of the battle against the FTA. The decision to form a joint Québec/Canada committee was taken at the Network's Eleventh Assembly held in Québec City in June 1990. With equal representation from English Canada and

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[60] See PCN Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Assembly Summaries; confirmed in Clarke, Interview by author.

[61] This judgement was expressed by chair Tony Clarke in a memorandum to member organizations. Tony Clarke, Memorandum to Member Organizations, 24 January 1990. Discussion of the Network's name is reported in PCN Tenth Assembly Summary.

[62] Peter Bakvis, Memorandum to Tony Clarke, 27 October 1990; Clarke, Interview by author.

The Québec Coalition's nomination of economist Ruth Rose to co-chair the Campaign for Fair Taxes was viewed by some as reinforcing the sense that the PCN was not a high priority. Rose was a relatively prominent activist but from the perspective of several other participants she did not carry the institutional support or decision-making power necessary to make the CFT structure effective.

Québec, the committee's mandate was to review working relationships around education materials and action strategies, propose a new model for future working relationship between Québec-based coalitions and the PCN, and make a specific proposal concerning changing the name of the Network.[63] During the course of three meetings, the committee considered a number of different proposals dealing with its mandate. Three comprehensive models were examined: minor adjustments to the *status quo*, recognizing the 'special status' of Québec groups in a pan-Canadian network, and adopting a binational model. The committee's report, adopted by the ACN's Thirteenth Assembly, proposed a series of changes along the lines of a 'special status' model.[64] These included increased representation for Québec groups within the Network's bodies, specifically the Assembly and the Steering Committee, as well as a new name – the Action Canada Network. According to their report, committee members viewed this as the most appropriate approach "in the current political context."[65] In the announcement of the Network's renaming, this "context" was described as including a "shift towards Québec sovereignty."[66]

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[63] PCN, "Report and Recommendations of the Québec-Canada Task Force" and PCN Tenth Assembly Summary. Committee members were Maude Barlow (Council of Canadians), Julie Davis (Ontario Federation of Labour), Duncan Cameron (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives), Monique Simard (Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux), Madeleine Parent (Solidarité populaire Québec), Raymond Johnston (Centrale des enseignants du Québec), and PCN chair Tony Clarke in an *ex-officio* capacity. In PCN files.

[64] While the 'English Canadian' representatives on the committee had been receptive to proposals to establish a binational structure, Québec representatives were reticent to move in this direction. One concern on their part was the FTQ's unwillingness to participate directly in the existing broadly based Québec coalition Solidarité Populaire. The PCN was a circuitous route to ensure the FTQ's participation since it was the provincial affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress. Barlow, Interview by author; Cameron, Interview by author; Clarke, Interview by author; Peter Bleyer, Memorandum to Tony Clarke, July 1990.

While the committee finally arrived at a consensus it was apparent that perceptions of the problem at hand differed greatly: "The basic assumptions representatives of Québec member groups make concerning the very nature of the PCN differ from those made by non-Québec groups and for that matter with contemporary reality. For the Québec side, the PCN remains an informal information-sharing network as it was at its inception and, in fact, as it remained until well into the 1988 Election Campaign. The rift between the Coalition québecoise and the PCN began at this point, with the shift in orientation towards action. It continued when the PCN moved quickly in December 1988 to extend its mandate to actively oppose the broader conservative/corporate agenda as a whole." Bleyer, "Memorandum to Tony Clarke."

[65] PCN, "Report and Recommendations of the Québec-Canada Task Force." See also Chantal Hébert, "La CSN et la CEQ redeviennent canadiennes le temps de faire la guerre aux politiques fédérales," *Le Devoir*, 6 avril 1991, A2 and Carol Goar, "Why Pro-Canada Group Changed its Name," *Toronto Star*, 6 April 1991.

Comments by Monique Simard, vice-president of the CSN and a member of the Québec/Canada

In her work on the Canadian women's movement, Phillips points out that the "relationship between francophone and anglophone organizations is a constant concern in Canadian social movements."[67] Among member groups of the PCN this was certainly the case. These concerns ranged from intra-organizational relationships between Québec and other sections, to each organization's stance *vis-à-vis* the constitutional debate. On this question positions varied widely. Some groups had historically been strong supporters of federalism, this was the case, for example, for the Council of Canadians; others, like the CCU, had adopted policy positions supporting Québec's right to self-determination.[68] A number of the Network's pan-Canadian member organizations faced protracted internal debate on this issue; still others developed specific organizational compromises to deal with the issue.[69] For example, while it did not openly support self-determination, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops maintained fraternal relations with a Québec body viewed as its *de facto* equal.[70]

Committee in the verbatim record of the January 1991 Assembly hint at the ambiguous perspective from Québec: "In Québec, sometimes we need a different public approach or to adapt our strategy and tactics. We are not really a separate network. We didn't want to lose the connection. All of the issues will be worked in Québec inside the network and adapted. Let's take free trade with Mexico; we have to do a special adaptation. The PQ is already pro-deal. We have to take a different approach; we need a different packaging in Québec." In ACN, Thirteenth Assembly, Verbatim transcript of discussion, January 1991, ACN files.

[66] ACN, "Introducing the... Action Canada Network," (Ottawa: 1991).

[67] Phillips, "Meaning and Structure in Social Movements: Mapping the Network of National Canadian Women's Organizations," 770.

[68] In a move that can at least partly be attributed to the impact of working in a broader popular sector and specifically the Pro-Canada Network, the Council's Board of Directors adopted a "three founding nations" stance in the fall of 1990. Barlow, Interview by author; see also Chapter 6, "A Constitution for All Canadians" in Maude Barlow and Bruce Campbell, *Take Back the Nation* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1991).

[69] On NAC and Québec, see Heather Jane Maroney and Meg Luxton, eds., *Feminism and Political Economy: Women's Work, Women's Struggle* (Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1987); Phillips, "Meaning and Structure in Social Movements: Mapping the Network of National Canadian Women's Organizations"; Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.* On the CLC and Québec, see Canadian Labour Congress, "The CLC and the Constitutional Package," Ottawa, 31 August 1992.

[70] Clarke, Interview by author. Records of an in-depth discussion of the political situation in Québec at the Network's Thirteenth Assembly (January 1991) reflect some continuing reticence to accept the sovereignist message coming from Québec groups. Summary of Discussion and Major Decisions, PCN, Thirteenth Assembly, Ottawa, 11-13 January 1991.

5. Entering the Constitutional Fray

The Pro-Canada Network was formed only days before the initial First Ministers Meeting that would lead to the Meech Lake Accord.[71] Given this timing and the Network's narrowly focused mandate, it is not surprising that the Accord did not appear on its agenda. Even as the deadline for ratification approached and the Accord and its travails became a virtual national soap opera three years later, the Network did not take up the constitutional file. As the *Dossier* argued in retrospect, the PCN's "hands were full" with "fallout from the FTA and opposing the GST."[72] In fact, many member organizations had taken positions on the Accord and they were far from unanimous in their opinions. The groups opposing Meech did so on a variety of grounds. The Accord did not meet the minimum requirements for self-determination set by many Québec-based organizations and the Assembly of First Nations. The closed-door model of executive federalism that had given birth to Meech was of concern to other organizations. NAC, for example, focused its critique on "eleven white men deciding Canada's future behind closed doors."[73] In addition, while the Meech Lake Accord reflected the Conservative government's calculation that "success on the constitutional front, a considerable prize in its own right would be enhanced to the extent that the agenda was limited," its strong bias to provincial powers and decentralization made it a fitting partner to the FTA.[74] Advocacy groups were very concerned that the 'opting out' clause included in the package would lead to the erosion of social programs in some provinces.[75] While there was little enthusiasm for the Accord, some PCN groups accepted it as an opportunity to bring about reconciliation with Québec.[76]

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[71] Held at Meech Lake, Québec on April 30, 1987.

[72] "The ACN and the Meech Lake Accord," *ACN Dossier*, July-August 1991.

[73] Ann Molgat with Joan Grant Cummings, "'An Action that Will Not be Allowed to Subside': NAC's First Twenty-five Years," NAC, 5 June 2000 <http://www.nac-cca.ca/about/his_e.htm>.

[74] McBride and Shields, *Dismantling a Nation: Canada and the New World Order*, 94-95; Breton and Jenson, "After Free Trade and Meech Lake: Quoi de neuf?"

[75] "The ACN and the Meech Lake Accord."

[76] Prominent examples were the Canadian Teachers' Federation and the Canadian Labour Congress.

The state of play within the Network began to shift early in 1991 when the Mulroney government mooted a new set of constitutional proposals and launched the Spicer Commission to sound out public attitudes.[77] The failure of the Meech Accord had upped the constitutional ante; Québec's conditions for accession to the constitution were now farther reaching and backed by a commitment to a provincial referendum by the fall of 1992. The federal package prepared in response largely met Québec's demands and included broader and more explicitly neo-liberal elements such as enshrining property rights, eliminating interprovincial trade barriers and a focus on competitiveness. Cameron and Smith describe the political logic of this new constitutional offensive as follows: "They offered something to each of the regions and key groups that have supported the government in the past, or that pose a potential threat to its constitutional objectives." Specifically, this included catering to the hankering in the corporate community for a dramatic withdrawal of the state from the economic realm through decentralization, deregulation and privatization.[78] Prime Minister Mulroney sketched out the new constitutional course in two major addresses in February 1991. His musings on the constitutional measures necessary to enhance Canada's "international competitiveness" were noted in a lead article in the *Pro-Canada Dossier* that also identified a marshalling of corporate support for the Tories emerging plan.[79]

While the Pro-Canada Network did not have the interest, the mandate or the resources to deal with the Meech Lake Accord, the newly minted Action Canada Network was in a somewhat different position. Meeting in January 1991 against the backdrop of a rekindled constitutional debate, the Network's Assembly agreed to a new name and structure. The new name was, in part, intended to clarify the Network's lack of affinity with the traditional national unity implications of the Pro-Canada

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[77] The proposals were published in September 1991 as *Shaping Canada's Future Together: Proposals*, Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1991.

[78] Cameron and Smith, eds., *Constitutional Politics*, 6-7. For a review of the neo-liberal economic elements of the package, see McBride and Shields, *Dismantling a Nation: Canada and the New World Order*, 104-05.

[79] "Tories Prepare Corporate Constitution," *ACN Dossier*, March-April 1991.

moniker.[80] Also, in the opinion of some, the Network's name had proven to be something of a liability in the process of building alliances in Mexico and the United States.[81]

Renaming also marked a commitment to the broader agenda and membership that the group had moved towards since the 1988 vote. As a flyer produced for the launch of the ACN three months later explained, "the political challenge of the corporate agenda has also become more sharply defined. The task of the Network is to develop a large movement of social solidarity that can effectively challenge the corporate agenda of the Mulroney government and big business. This means reaching out, to broaden and deepen the participation of people's organizations."[82]

The momentum that led to its renaming carried the Action Canada Network into the thick of the constitutional debate. After a celebration of the Network's new identity, the April 1991 Assembly mandated the Steering Committee to develop, "a set of proposed strategies for the participation of the ACN and its member organizations in the forthcoming constitutional debate."[83] Delegates at the Assembly were reflecting a number of developments. First, sympathy for both Québec and the First Nations in a number of organizations had, until then, been expressed in largely ritualistic resolutions affirming the national right to self-determination. Daily events and the increasing optimism of Québec nationalists about the prospects for sovereignty now challenged this stance.[84] At both the January and April 1991 Assemblies, representatives of trade unions and social organizations expressed their quandary in different ways. Some indicated their organizations were taking steps to

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[80] Goar, "Why Pro-Canada Group Changed its Name."

[81] The comments of one trade unionist at the Thirteenth Assembly are apposite: "I'm glad to see the name change. The perception is that we had a narrow nationalistic focus... what we're concerned about it's the destruction of society. I'm happy about the name change because it makes it easier to work with Americans and Mexicans." ACN, Thirteenth Assembly, Verbatim transcript of discussion, January 1991, ACN files.

[82] ACN, "Introducing the... Action Canada Network." See also Goar, "Why Pro-Canada Group Changed its Name."

[83] Noted in the introduction to "The ACN and the Constitutional Debate: A Set of Proposals."

[84] In their interventions at Assemblies in during this period, Québec delegates indicated they felt sovereignty was little shy of inevitable; for example, CSN representative Monique Simard gave a verbal report on the "state of the sovereignist movement." PCN Thirteenth Assembly Summary.

clarify or advance their positions. Perhaps most importantly, with a dynamic new president, NAC had taken a strong stance against the federal proposals. Led by Judy Rebick, NAC saw the Network as the only table in the country that brought together labour and social organizations from both Québec and the rest of Canada and thus the obvious place to take up the constitutional challenge.[85]

At the same time, the Mulroney government's now more aggressively neo-liberal approach to the constitutional file fit right into the renamed Network's mandate and work plan. In March 1991, before the Network's renaming at its April Assembly, the *Dossier* referred to "weakening the federal government and eliminating democratic control over the economy" as the "key planks in Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's plan to revamp Canada's constitution."[86] Later, in reporting the ACN's entry into the debate, the *Dossier* would refer to the Tory proposals for a "corporate constitution" and argue that "many of the governments specific proposals are designed to respond to the requirements of the Canada-U.S. FTA."[87] The apparent renewal of the constitutional brinksmanship that characterized the Meech Accord melded with dissatisfaction with Tory social and economic policies to give the Mulroney government extremely low public opinion ratings in the winter of 1991.[88] Moreover, by that summer close to 70 percent of Canadians viewed the constitution (40 percent) and national unity (29 percent) as the top issues on the public agenda.[89]

All of these factors contributed to a crescendo of support for a constitutional intervention by the Network in the lead up to a meeting of its Steering Committee on 16 May. While the pressure to take an active role was led by NAC and Québec organizations, with forceful presentations by Rebick and CSN vice-president Monique Simard, it also came from others, including trade unions that supported self-

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[85] Ibid.

[86] "Tories Prepare Corporate Constitution," 1.

[87] "Network Edges into Constitution Debate," *ACN Dossier*, July-August 1991, 9 and "Political Proposals Reflect Economic Restructuring," *ACN Dossier*, September-October 1991, 1.

[88] The same polls ranked the NDP as the most popular federal party in January 1991. *The Reid Report*, May 1993.

[89] *The Reid Report*, May 1993, 2.

determination and social groups concerned with the impact of the 'opting out' clause. The minutes of the meeting indicate that the chair was also very much in agreement:

> Clarke is feeling strongly about the urgency of getting the Network primed for intervening in this debate. As it is framed now, it is designed to camouflage some of the deeper economic and political issues. Mulroney is leading a free trade driven constitutional agenda. We have to develop progressive positions in relation to that dynamic.[90]

6. The Charlottetown Referendum

At its Fifteenth Assembly (9-11 August 1991), the ACN confirmed constitutional work as part of a "three-pronged action plan."[91] Over the fall, ACN leadership and staff participated in a number of initiatives involving a range of think tanks and independent academics. All of this activity culminated in the publication of a position statement on the constitutional debate.[92] This document also laid out a strategy for intervening in the series of constitutional conferences planned by the federal government for early in the New Year. The Network focused a substantial amount of energy on ensuring and coordinating participation by its member groups and other like-minded organizations in conferences held in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver.[93] An ACN staffer at the time acknowledges that while the group's tactics "sound benign" these were "truly effective interventions."[94] Certainly, the ACN and some of its member groups received a large amount of media profile around the conferences and, in some cases, credit for the eventual outcome. As McBride sums up: "In general the items related to the five areas of the federal constitutional proposals most relevant to the neo-conservative agenda were not well received by the constitutional conferences."[95]

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[90] Minutes, ACN, Steering Committee, Ottawa, 16 May 1991.

[91] ACN, "Report on Fifteenth Assembly," 29 August 1991.

[92] ACN, "Taking Charge of our Political Future: Working Paper on Constitutional Development," December 1991.

[93] Based on information in ACN files December 1991 - February 1992 as well as interviews with Mike McBane and Tony Clarke.

[94] McBane, Interview by author.

[95] McBride and Shields, *Dismantling a Nation: Canada and the New World Order*, 111. McBride and shields provide a more detailed discussion of the dulling of the neo-conservative edges of the federal governments position. Maude Barlow gives her own interpretation of the constitutional conferences in her autobiography: "what started as a series of dry, tightly controlled gatherings of the country's

The constitutional process re-initiated by the Tories in 1991 culminated with a final package of proposals in July 1992 that was put to a national plebiscite in October 1992. Along with federal government, both the Liberal opposition and the federal NDP advocated a yes vote in what became known as the Charlottetown referendum. The ranks of the popular sector, and with it the ACN, were split between Yes and No camps.[96] For NAC, "the issue was the weakening of the federal government and loss of national standards. Women in Canada know that without national standards and important programs being administered by the federal government, the situation of women would worsen." Like the NDP, the CLC felt the proposals, while imperfect, provided a necessary compromise to satisfy the demands of Québec.[97]

While the ACN Assembly did take positions on aspects of the referendum process – for example opposing the referendum legislation as based on inadequate attention to fundamental democratic principles – differences in the ranks kept the Network on the sidelines for the campaign and vote. Nevertheless, many participants were very pleased with the role played by the Network and tended to view the referendum as a moment of maturing for it.[98] On the eve of the vote, member groups engaged on different sides of a vigorous campaign came to the following conclusion regarding the ACN's role:

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anointed, turned into a boisterous and disorderly outbreak of democracy, as citizens advocacy groups, coordinated under the ACN, turned back the corporate agenda so openly at work." Barlow, *The Fight of My Life: Confessions of an Unrepentant Canadian*, 119-20.

Examples of media coverage of the three nations position put forward by the ACN include: "Left's Proposal Envisions Three Nations," *Globe and Mail*, 16 December 1991; William Johnson, "Skewed Agenda: Three-founding-nation Group Shrieked about Free Trade and Ignored Meech Lake," *Montreal Gazette*, 7 February 1992, B3. For reports on the impact of ACN participation, see Carol Goar, "Did Left Really Orchestrate Montreal Conference?" *Toronto Star*, 6 February 1992, A19; Deborah Dowling, "Coalition of Lobby Groups Hijack Government's Agenda: Alliance to Press for Social Charter," *Ottawa Citizen*, 3 February 1992, A3; Linda Hossie, "Grassroots Groups Altered Content of Unity Debate," *Globe and Mail*, 25 February 1992, A7.

[96] Among ACN members, the CLC and CTF were in the YES camp; NAC and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers on the NO side while a number of other groups remained neutral (e.g. National Union of Public and General Employees, Canadian Union of Public Employees, National Farmers Union, Canadian Federation of Students, Public Service Alliance of Canada). ACN, "Notes on Referendum Discussion at Nineteenth Assembly," 4 October 1992.

[97] Ann Molgat with Joan Grant Cummings, "'An Action that Will Not be Allowed to Subside': NAC's First Twenty-five Years," NAC, 5 June 2000 <http://www.nac-cca.ca/about/his_e.htm>; see also Judy Rebick, "Why Not Women?" *Canadian Forum*, October 1992; the CLC's position is set out in Canadian Labour Congress, "The CLC and the Constitutional Package."

[98] Author's interviews with various ACN participants.

> The Assembly serves as an ongoing forum for the direct exchange of views on the constitutional question. Member organizations were able to speak to the context of their respective position on the referendum. This in itself is a contribution to the debate. Aware of the potential for division and misunderstanding, a wide-ranging discussion took place with full respect for different organisational, sectoral and regional perspectives.[99]

They concluded further that "regardless of the outcome, we stand united with our common concerns about the corporate economic and social agenda; the Network has an important leadership role to play in 'picking up the pieces' once the divisive referendum and its polarized yes/no politics run its course."[100]

7. Back to NAFTA

When negotiators for Canada, the U.S. and Mexico initialled a draft NAFTA after an around the clock session in Washington early in August 1992, they set the stage for a yearlong endgame in the battle over continental free trade. In Canada, the ACN kicked off a flurry of anti-deal activity as the smoke from October's Charlottetown referendum was clearing. At a news conference on 12 November, the Network tried to turn its divided ranks during the constitutional plebiscite to advantage, in order to highlight the collective commitment to take on NAFTA. Joined by CLC president Bob White and NAC president Judy Rebick, representing groups on either side of the referendum divide, Council of Canadians chair Maude Barlow told the media: "We are serving notice that we have regrouped... and we're going to fight this very hard."[101]

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[99] ACN, "Notes on Referendum Discussion at Nineteenth Assembly." ACN Staffer Randy Robinson offers the following assessment: "Ultimately, the ACN member groups took different positions on the October 1992 referendum, but the ACN kept civil communications alive between member organizations on opposite sides of the Yes/No fence." Randy Robinson, "Democracy from Below," *Canadian Forum*, April 1993, 12.

[100] ACN Seventeenth Assembly Summary.

[101] "Coalition Ready for Fight Over Free Trade Deal," *Ottawa Citizen*, 13 November 1992, A4; see also "White Blasts Free Trade," *Financial Post*, 13 November 1992, A4; "L'opposition s'organise contre l'adoption de l'ALENA," *Le Devoir*, 13 novembre 1992, A5 and Jonathan Ferguson, "Free Trade Driving Jobless to Suicide, Angry White Says," *Toronto Star*, 13 November 1992, A14.

In an op-ed published in the *Globe and Mail*, Clarke builds on the majority of ACN groups' sympathetic view of the NO position arguing that NAFTA had more dramatic negative consequences that the economic union in the Charlottetown package. Tony Clarke, "NAFTA: A New Constitutional Trap," *Globe and Mail*, 18 December 1992.

In reality, while the constitution had drawn a large amount of attention from the Network and from some of its member groups in particular, the focus on trade had been sustained thanks to the Common Frontiers project and the Network's secretariat. With FTA abrogation garnering little interest, the trinational trade negotiations quickly became the priority. After the U.S. Congress gave President Bush 'fast track' negotiating authority for NAFTA on 23 May 1991, negotiations were underway.[102] For its part, the ACN organized nationwide anti-NAFTA protest activities on 1 June in advance of the first negotiation session to be held in Toronto on 12 June. The 'fast track' decision gave a new momentum to opposition in the U.S. leading to the formation of two new groupings, the Citizens Tradewatch Campaign and the Alliance for Responsible Trade (ART). As Robinson notes, "these efforts created, for the first time, something that the ACN recognized as a counterpart to its national network."[103]

In conjunction with its American and Mexican allies, the ACN began assiduously following the negotiations. As sessions moved from city to city, NAFTA opponents from the three countries were on-site, sharing strategy and staging joint actions challenging their governments.[104] Between sessions, Common Frontiers, the ACN and their trinational allies focused on obtaining as much information about the content of the talks as possible. More than once their efforts were rewarded with the delivery of 'brown envelopes.' Most notably, in March 1992, they obtained the full text of the draft agreement, which was quickly made public. A detailed analysis was

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[102] At a news conference in Toronto to mark the 'fast track' decision, Common Frontiers representatives argued that the US would use new negotiations to seek further Canadian concessions and noted the trilateral work trade liberalization opponents had done toward an alternative Continental Development Pact. "Round Two Begins," *ACN Dossier*, May-June 1991.

[103] Robinson, "NAFTA, Social Unionism, and Labour Movement Power in Canada and the United States," 678. See also Ritchie, "Fighting Free Trade U.S. Style"; and "June 1 Events Mark Start of Round Two," *ACN Dossier*, May-June 1991.

[104] Negotiations took place in Toronto (June 1991), Seattle (August 1991), Zacatecas (October 1991), Chantilly, Virginia (February 1992), Montreal (April 1992), and finally the historic Watergate Hotel in Washington (August 1992).

Actions around the Montreal negotiations are described in "Network Keeps Heat On," *ACN Dossier*, March-April 1992 and "Hold Talks in Public, Unions Say," *Montreal Gazette*, 7 April 1992, A2; Seattle in "Groups Demand Open Negotiations," *ACN Dossier*, July-August 1991; and Chantilly in "NAFTA Draft Stays Secret," *ACN Dossier*, January-February 1992. See also Barlow, *The Fight of My Life: Confessions of an Unrepentant Canadian*, 131.

prepared by Common Frontiers and published by the CCPA though only several weeks later.[105]

Events around the Zacatecas negotiations were especially significant. An international citizens' forum was convened with more than 300 representatives, mostly Mexican but including fifteen Canadians and a few Americans. Zacatecas was considered an important 'coming out' for the Mexican Network; the ACN *Dossier* claimed that the event "put Mexican opposition on the map" and went on to explain:

> The media coverage of the event was a first and gave a lot of visibility to the Mexican network. Also, the delegations from Québec, Canada and the United States gave an international character to the event and reinforced its credibility.[106]

The Mexican Network felt it had benefited from three key factors: public exposure through Mexican and international media, broad representation of Mexican society, and the presence of key political leaders such as Cardenas and the opposition candidate for Governor in the Mexican state of San Luis Potosi.[107] Significantly, after a public confrontation between ACN chair Tony Clarke and Canadian Trade Minister Michael Wilson led to a brief private meeting between the two, both the American and Mexican negotiators sent representatives to meet with Clarke's U.S. and Mexican counterparts. This bestowed instant recognition and credibility on the Mexican coalition turning Zacatecas into its "launching pad."[108]

8. From Parallel Accords to Social Agendas

Despite Minister Wilson's meeting with Clarke at Zacatecas, much like its U.S. and Mexican counterparts, the Canadian government hoped to limit discussion

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[105] "Trade Text No Big Deal, Wilson Says, Opponents Fear Loss of Canada's Sovereignty," *Ottawa Citizen*, 25 March 1992, A4; "NAFTA is a Very Big Deal," *ACN Dossier*, March-April 1992; The detailed analysis of the NAFTA text was not prepared with the same urgency as were the various reports based on the FTA text in 1988. There is evidence of interorganizational tension between the ACN, CCPA, and Common Frontiers. Duncan Cameron, Interview by author, Ottawa 1997; Clarke, Interview by author; Traynor, Interview by author.

[106] Randy Robinson and Louis Poirier, "Event puts Mexican Opposition on Map," *ACN Dossier*, November-December 1991, 4; Traynor, Interview by author;

[107] Sinclair, ed., *Crossing the Line*, 140.

[108] *ACN Dossier*, November-December 1991; Clarke, Interview by author; Foster, Interview by author; Traynor, Interview by author.

and debate on the new trinational deal. As it had in 1988, the Network aimed to achieve exactly the opposite result.[109] Following more or less the same model, the ACN produced a detailed analysis and critique of the NAFTA text and planned dramatic protests to counter the federal government's public relations offensive. Most notably, on 17 December a number of ACN leaders disrupted a NAFTA signing ceremony staged on Parliament Hill.[110] The Ottawa ceremony was one of several staged by the three governments anxious to promote the agreement. A signing event in San Antonio, Texas in October appeared designed to help president Bush defend the merits of NAFTA in the run-up to the American federal election. While Bill Clinton, the Democratic challenger, was prone to pulling his punches on NAFTA, Ross Perot, a maverick business executive, mounting a third party challenge under the banner of the Reform Party campaigned directly against the agreement as a threat to American jobs. NAFTA posed something of a dilemma for the Clinton Democrats who were committed to trade liberalization but equally concerned to hang on to their traditional liberal support base. To resolve this conundrum, Clinton seized on the parallel accords on environment and labour first introduced by President Bush in an attempt to insure passage of NAFTA by the U.S. Congress. Clinton promised to revisit NAFTA to obtain stronger and more effective side agreements as he looked to firm up support from the labour movement and environmental groups. As a result, when the Democrats took the presidency in November 1992, the NAFTA story entered a new chapter. The parallel accords opened the door to a period of intensive trinational action and lobbying largely focused on the Congress. The accords also posed the most significant test to date for the relationship between free trade

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[109] Maude Barlow refers to the record of a Government strategy session published in the newsmagazine *Maclean's*. It was the "transcript of telephone call involving more than a dozen senior Tory aides during which they planned a costly and extensive campaign to discredit us." Barlow, *The Fight of My Life: Confessions of an Unrepentant Canadian*, 133.

[110] ACN, News Release, "ACN Demands Full Public Hearings on NAFTA," Ottawa, 12 November 1992; ACN, "Tories Have No Mandate to Impose NAFTA: A Joint Statement of the Action Canada Network," Public Statement, Ottawa, 12 November 1992; Ian Austen, "Protests Mark Start of Trade Hearings," *Edmonton Journal*, 18 November 1992, A3; "Free-trade Flag Flap," *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 December 1992, A1; "Free Trade Free-for-all," *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 December 1992, F1; see also account in Barlow, *The Fight of My Life: Confessions of an Unrepentant Canadian*, 133-34.

opponents in the three countries, as well as creating an additional internal challenge for the ACN.

The promise of tougher parallel accords on labour and the environment was well received by most U.S. anti-free trade groups but the response north of the forty-ninth parallel was very different. While Jim Jontz, the former congressman from Indiana who was national coordinator of the Citizens' Trade Campaign argued that NAFTA must "either be fixed or defeated," the ACN's Tony Clarke summarized its stance succinctly: "[Y]ou can't fix NAFTA with side-bar deals or parallel accords."[111] In the United States, support for the accords was rooted in a moderate and increasingly marginal labour movement and large environmental organizations, both with strong ties to the Democratic Party.[112] The Canadian position on parallel accords evolved out of a combination of factors. It was informed, in part, by a continuing debate concerning the value of the social charter adopted by the European Community, driven by the Canadian labour movement's historic relationship with European trade unions and social democracy. Interest in the European social charter was generally less than enthusiastic, while scepticism regarding the model was reinforced by the experience of coalition politics through the PCN/ACN. The Network also provided space for non-CLC unions and CLC affiliates alike to express their opposition in a more forceful manner than would otherwise have been the case.[113]

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[111] Both are quoted in "NAFTA News Summary," *Trade News Bulletin.*

[112] On differences between the Canadian and US labour movements and specifically the inclination toward social unionism in the former and to business unionism in the latter, see Robinson, "NAFTA, Social Unionism, and Labour Movement Power in Canada and the United States."

[113] For statements of the Canadian critique of the accords, see ACN, "A Position Statement on NAFTA and the Side-bar Negotiations," Ottawa, 2 April 1993 and "Open Letter from Council of Canadians and Prominent Canadians: Side Deals Can't Fix a Bad Agreement," *Canadian Perspectives*, Autumn 1993. The Canadian position was that parallel accords could not be made effective without reopening the NAFTA text itself for renegotiation. To whit, "the core elements in NAFTA will simply override anything that may emerge from these side-bar negotiations." In ACN, "The NAFTA Sidebars - an Exercise in Political Deception?" Ottawa, undated.

The Canadian debate on the European social charter is reflected in "Lessons from Europe: The EC Charter: a Symbolic Victory Only? Or a Foot in the Door," *ACN Dossier*, May-June 1991.

From the vantage point of the Mexican Network, the parallel accords were an opportunity to deal with a difficult domestic political situation. The impossibility of outright opposition to trade liberalization and NAFTA had driven the Mexicans to promote and counterpose to it a broad alternative model for development; an approach that was coined the 'social agenda.' While the ACN was sympathetic, and indeed influenced in terms of its own outlook by the Mexican emphasis on alternatives, there was concern that the 'social agenda' also "lent itself to quick fixes such as the side bar agreements."[114] A memorandum from the Mexican Network to the ACN, dated as the deadline set for the parallel accords by President Clinton approached, appears to confirm this assessment:

> We are perfectly aware of your position on the parallel agreements, and we respect it. We are also aware that time is running out. However, we still believe that it would be advantageous for the networks of the three countries to not let these negotiations slip by without taking some kind of action. Would it not be possible, in accordance with your position and in keeping with your own conditions, to hold some kind of activity in solidarity with the proposals we presented to the Mexican, Canadian and US delegations? (Translation from the Spanish original).[115]

For similar reasons, the parallel accords further stoked tensions between English-Canadian and Québec-based NAFTA opponents. Particularly in the aftermath of the failure of Meech Lake followed by the No vote in the Charlottetown referendum, labour and social organizations in Québec were preoccupied with the ongoing debate on the national question. As we have seen above, opposition to free trade in Québec had always been tempered by the aspirations for Québec sovereignty harboured to greater or lesser extent by most popular sector organizations in the province. The Mexican social agenda approach also fit into the worldview of groups like the CSN, which, in fact, participated in its development through an ongoing dialogue with Mexican organizations like the FAT and that was now expanding to include groups in other Latin American countries.

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[114] Clarke, Interview by author.

[115] RMALC, Memorandum to ACN, 18 May 1993; the role of the Mexican Network in working with US groups to "push parallel accords on labor and the environment through the U.S. Congress" is confirmed in *The Mexico Weekly Report: An on-line summary and analysis of the week's most important news from Mexico* (April 1996 [cited 21 April 2000]); available from www.mexicoweekly.com/Archive/MWR.411996.

Further confusing matters, by mid-1992 the ACN was finally preparing a domestic campaign for abrogation of the Canada-U.S. FTA in line with its commitment at the initial Mexico City Encuentro. This position had never been of any great interest to the Network's U.S. interlocutors who had largely ignored the FTA in the first instance. Now, the Americans were in hot pursuit of tough side agreements for NAFTA and free trade opponents in Québec and Mexico were attracted by the potential for advancing a social agenda through the opening created by the parallel accords.

Through the opening months of 1993, all eyes were on Washington as activists from Canada and Mexico joined U.S. groups in lobbying Congress and attempting to shift American public opinion against NAFTA.[116] While key ACN and Common Frontiers actors including Clarke, Barlow, Traynor and others travelled to Washington more than once during this period, support for efforts in the U.S. did not come at the expense of domestic action planning. On the home front, the ACN was gearing up for a major mobilization.[117]

9. Another Free Trade Election?

Other accounts broadly confirm the assessment that at the ACN's January 1993 Assembly, "discussion and commitment to action was at its highest level since the 1988 election period. National organizations and provincial coalitions indicated their willingness to work toward a major mobilization around the corporate agenda with the centrepiece being the FTA/NAFTA."[118] Delegates were energized by successful actions against NAFTA in the late fall and early winter, and nourished by widespread public dissatisfaction with the Mulroney government mired at 20 percent or less in public support now for three full years and approaching the end of its

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[116] Fagan, "NAFTA Fight Draws on Canadian Experience: American, Mexican Anti-Free Trade Coalitions Look North for Ammunition, Inspiration"; Traynor, Interview by author and Barlow, Interview by author.

[117] ACN, "Action Plan '93 Update," 16 February 1993 lays out plans for this period in detail.

[118] Introduction to ibid.; confirmed in personal interviews with participants.

mandate.[119] Out of this charged atmosphere came extensive and ambitious plans to ramp up the anti-NAFTA battle through 1993. Over the next few weeks, member groups considered these proposals to determine the degree to which they might participate and provide support. The response of the CLC was by far the most important. Congress representatives had participated in the January Assembly that had generated these plans and the message sent by the recent election of CAW president Bob White to head the CLC no doubt played some part in invigorating the meeting. Nevertheless, a full commitment by the Congress to the ACN's plans required approval by its Executive Council with representation from its affiliates. In a letter to affiliate leaders, Bob White called for support for a major commitment of resources to the plans for mobilization. He concluded:

> There is no question in my mind that if we decide as a movement to participate in such a demonstration and commit the necessary resources to organize it, it will be a huge success. We cannot leave the March meeting without a decision on this matter, so I urge you to come prepared to spend the necessary time on this issue and to make a decision.[120]

At the subsequent meeting of the CLC's Executive Council, White got affiliate support for a major labour movement investment in a spring mobilization. A two-track process ensued with the Congress leading on preparations for a large rally on Parliament Hill and the ACN handling plans for a coast-to-coast caravan – this time by road, but again loosely styled on the 1930s "On to Ottawa" Trek. The caravan brought out supporters in dozens of communities across the country and garnered tremendous local media attention and the 15 May rally brought between sixty and one hundred thousand demonstrators to Ottawa.[121]

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[119] A video including footage of the disruption of the Ottawa NAFTA signing ceremony was played for delegates at the opening of the Assembly.

[120] Robert White, Memorandum to CLC Executive Council, 23 February 1993.

[121] Jean Swanson, "Report on ACN Caravan," ACN, June 1993 reports a generally very positive response. Media coverage included "Anti-Free Trade Caravan Heads for Ottawa," *Vancouver Sun*, 19 April 1993, A2; "Cross-country Caravan Targets Free Trade Deal," *Lethbridge Herald*, 28 April 1993, ; Carol Goar, "The Angry Spirit of 1935 Rises Up Again," *Toronto Star*, 15 May 1993, ; "Anti-FTA Caravan Stops in Fredericton," *The Daily Gleaner*, 12 May 1993, 8; "NAFTA Protest Travelling Country," *The Evening Telegram*, 26 April 1993, 3. Editorial support for the demonstration came in "Time to Protest and Celebrate," *Ottawa Citizen* 1993, 14 May; see also "60,000 Turn Hill into Carnival of Protest," *Ottawa Citizen*, 16 May 1993, and "Fed up," *Ottawa Sun*, 16 May 1993, 1,4-5.

10. The 1993 Election

The ACN's presence during the 1993 election campaign would pale in comparison to a dynamic pre-election period culminating in the cross-country caravan and large labour-backed rally on Parliament Hill. While the campaign launch garnered respectable coverage in the media, in the end, the Network's electoral footprint was very limited.[122] As in 1988, the Network secretariat produced materials for use by member organizations during the campaign. Network leaders such as Tony Clarke and Maude Barlow were invited to address meetings and conventions of member groups and a few community forums on NAFTA were convened in conjunction with regional and local coalitions.[123]

Driven by the afterglow of the cartoon booklet's success in 1988, there were two attempts to develop and widely distribute a publication in 1993. First, author Rick Salutin was approached to develop a tabloid modelled on his original cartoon booklet, this time focusing on NAFTA. Salutin's prototype generated only limited interest beyond the core ACN leadership, and sparse financial commitments from member groups. In addition to some doubts about the importance of free trade as an issue in the election campaign, most thought the publication was "too text heavy and under-illustrated." In the end, less than three hundred thousand copies were printed based on $67,000 in financing, a far cry from the 1988 effort. The new publication had none of the media and public impact of the earlier cartoon booklet.[124]

Midway in the campaign, a satire of Canada's national newspaper of record, the *Globe and Mail*, was produced by Guerrilla Media, a Vancouver-based group of media activists. Activists shoved approximately twenty thousand copies of the four-page broadsheet into *Globe and Mail* paper boxes in fifteen communities across the country. Anxious for a major intervention in the campaign, the ACN leadership

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[122] On the low profile of free trade and 'nationalism' in the campaign, see Michael Valpy, "A Lonely Walk for the Nationalists," *Globe and Mail*, 21 October 1993, A2.

[123] Events are tracked in the relevant issues of the ACN Bulletin, which was published weekly starting in August 1993 and for the duration of the election campaign.

[124] ACN, "Election '93 Activities: Preliminary Notes prepared for the ACN Campaign Strategy Committee," 5 November 1993.

approached key member groups to consider broad distribution of the satirical tabloid in target ridings. The idea was tested in a meeting with the co-chairs of the NDP's campaign who agreed to approach their provincial campaigns to gauge their interest.[125] The ACN proposed to print one million copies and succeeded in raising $50,000 from trade unions to this end. The print run was eventually cut in half reflecting less than anticipated interest from the NDP's provincial offices.[126]

Whether they attributed the recession that hit Canada from 1989 to 1991 to the FTA or not, by 1993 Canadians most certainly viewed Prime Minister Mulroney and the Tories as the villains. The FTA, the GST and the Bank of Canada's zero inflation policy were all blamed for slow growth in 1989 followed in 1990 by a full year of economic contraction; no real recovery had yet been felt at the time of the 1993 campaign. The prime minister's February resignation and June replacement by Kim Campbell, a one-term cabinet minister, led to a brief summer flirtation between voters and the Conservative Party. Whether as a result of stumbles by the new leader or a failure to convince Canadians that new leadership had cleansed the party of blame, Campbell led the Tories to their worst electoral defeat ever winning 16 percent of the popular vote and only two parliamentary seats.[127]

With an anti-Tory wave sweeping the country, the ACN's participation in the 1993 campaign was hamstrung by the complexity of its objectives. In addition to a third consecutive Conservative majority government, the ACN also feared the possibility of a Tory minority that could govern with the support of the right-wing populist Reform Party. Finally, a Liberal majority government was added to the list of unacceptable outcomes. A working document presented to the June 1992 Assembly

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[125] This was in keeping with the general thrust of the NDP's campaign efforts. In his study of the NDP's campaign in 1993, Alan Whitehorn argues that the party was intent on compensating for its performance in 1988 by dealing with free trade in a "more forthright manner." Whitehorn, "Audrey McLaughlin and the Decline of the Federal NDP," 48. Party staffer Ian McLeod adds: "Ever since 1988, the NDP's election planners had worked with two cardinal rules: keep the next campaign open for consultation, and don't ignore free trade." Ian McLeod, *Under Siege: the Federal NDP in the Nineties* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1994), 100.

[126] ACN, "Election '93 Activities: Preliminary Notes prepared for the ACN Campaign Strategy Committee"; and Rocks, Interview by author.

[127] Alan Frizzell, Jon H. Pammett, and Anthony Westell, eds., *The Canadian General Election of 1993* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994).

concluded: "There seems to be a general consensus that either one of these scenarios would amount to the election of a right-wing government and the extension of the corporate agenda."[128]

As the scale of anti-Tory sentiment became clear during the election campaign, ACN chair Tony Clarke signed a fundraising letter that reflects a refocusing on the threat of a Liberal majority government:

> The challenge of the '93 election is clear. We must do everything we can to see that the ingredients are there to form a progressive minority government following October 25th. To do so, we must ensure that a significant number of New Democrats are elected to form a minority government with the Liberals.[129]

A somewhat more tentatively worded news release made the same case: "[t]he election of a Liberal-NDP government may be the key to blocking NAFTA and saving Canada's social programmes."[130]

The electoral landscape was further complicated by the presence of the fledgling National Party led by Council of Canadians founder Mel Hurtig. While the new party "sank without a trace" in the course of the campaign, Hurtig's foray into electoral politics was an additional consideration for the ACN, and above all, for the Council of Canadians.[131] Hurtig and his main financial backer Bill Loewen did their utmost to convince the Council of Canadians to support their endeavour. The Council declined to support the National Party arguing that the only likely consequence of its presence on the ballot was to split the anti-free trade vote.[132] For the ACN as a whole, Hurtig's party posed less of a quandary given the overwhelming support for the NDP

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[128] ACN, "Election Strategies," Working Document presented for discussion at the ACN Assembly, 5-7 June 1992.

[129] ACN, Fundraising Letter, 4 October 1993.

[130] ACN, News Release, "Minority Government Key to Saving the Country," Ottawa, 21 September 1993; "Liberal Minority Best Hope," *Cape Breton Post*, 18 September 1993, 1.

[131] See the assessment of the National Party in Frizzell, Pammett, and Westell, eds., *The Canadian General Election of 1993*. For Hurtig's own account of the formation and short history of the National Party, see Hurtig, *At Twilight in the Country, Memoirs of a Canadian Nationalist*, 355-93.

[132] "Council Says Votes Wasted Supporting National Party," *Edmonton Journal*, 2 October 1993, A3. See also Hurtig, *At Twilight in the Country, Memoirs of a Canadian Nationalist*. Maude Barlow discusses the formation of the National Party and the rift both personal and organizational this caused between her and Hurtig in Barlow, *The Fight of My Life: Confessions of an Unrepentant Canadian*, 157-60.

from most member organizations with partisan leanings. Nevertheless, particularly on Hurtig's home turf in Alberta, the presence of the new party did affect the ACN. In Edmonton, Hurtig's hometown and the NDP's stronghold in the province, ACN-Alberta attempted to broker a deal between the NDP and the new party. Co-chair Maureen Werlin wrote to candidates in Edmonton East and Edmonton Northwest urging them "to meet and endeavour to resolve this dilemma so that the anti-free trade vote in these constituencies can be mobilized and made effective." While neither party responded positively to the initiative, the NDP was incensed that the National Party even considered standing against its lone Alberta incumbent in Edmonton East.[133]

The ACN approached the federal election in the fall of 1993 with some optimism. Since the 1988 vote, the Network had grown in membership, increased its profile and met a series of challenges. Its stature had been enhanced by its role in the constitutional debates the previous year and in the campaign against the GST prior to that.[134] Meanwhile the political opportunity structure facing the Network was now substantially altered. The ACN could no longer count on the Liberal Party as an ally though it could rely on the NDP to take the issue of free trade more seriously. In addition, the Network now had allies in Mexico and the U.S. as part of a trinational coalition. Most importantly, as a report to the ACN Assembly in Vancouver in June 1992 put it: "We have public support, they (the public) understand the issue but it is up to us to take advantage of this opportunity. The context for this round of the free trade debate is dramatically better."[135]

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[133] Maureen Werlin, Co-chair, ACN Alberta, Memorandum to Edmonton East and Northwest NDP and National Party candidates, 24 September 1993.

[134] In particular, the ACN's ability to coalesce different sides from the constitutional battle was noted by the media. "Putting aside their constitutional differences, leaders of national labour and social groups vowed Thursday to unity to fight the North American Free Trade Agreement. Some of these groups found themselves on opposite sides of the campaign leading up to the October 26 plebiscite on the ill-fated Charlottetown accord. But now, says Tony Clarke, leader of the ACN a united front has emerged to oppose NAFTA." "Coalition Ready for Fight Over Free Trade Deal."

[135] Common Frontiers, "Update to ACN Meeting," Vancouver, 5-7 June 1992.

By the time a federal election was called in the fall of 1993, this optimism was tempered. Widespread public concern with the state of the economy generated a wave of anti-Tory sentiment rather than a more specific reaction to the FTA and NAFTA. As a result, Canadians flocked to the one party they felt was most likely to defeat the Conservative government. As Alan Whitehorn posits in his study of the campaign, the NDP's focus on free trade was simply "one election too late." He adds that "even nationalist allies such as the Council of Canadians seemed less able to arouse the public on the issue in 1993."[136] Frizzell et al. identify a substantial change in voters' assessment of the importance of issues between the 1988 and 1993 campaigns. Whereas free trade was considered the most important issue by a stunning 88 percent of the electorate in 1988, it was only viewed as such by 2 percent of voters five years later. At the same time, a more general concern with unemployment and jobs went from 2 percent all the way up to 49 percent in 1993.[137]

Despite the NDP's twin commitments to campaign against NAFTA and to remain open to "consultation" in developing its plans, and notwithstanding the web of 'interlocking directorships' linking the party to the ACN, relations between the two fluctuated between warm and cool over the course of the campaign. Correspondence between Tony Clarke and the NDP's campaign co-chairs hints at some of the points of friction. The annoyance of party officials is almost palpable when they challenge Clarke on the ACN's position:

> [Y]ou favour the election of a minority government. This may not be helpful at the level of the individual voter, since we know that Canadians vote for candidates, not for minority governments.[138]

In response, Clarke expresses his frustration that the NDP has not commented earlier since "there is nothing new about (the ACN's) strategy" and concludes with a description of the limitations faced by the ACN *vis-à-vis* partisanship and electoral politics.[139] One issue did see the federal NDP and ACN very much united: both had

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[136] Whitehorn, "Audrey McLaughlin and the Decline of the Federal NDP," 48.

[137] See table 7 in Frizzell, Pammett, and Westell, eds., *The Canadian General Election of 1993*, 152.

[138] Fraser Green and Julie Davis, Letter to Tony Clarke, 25 September 1993.

[139] It is worth recalling that one of the NDP campaign co-chairs was Ontario Federation of Labour

high expectations for interventions by provincial NDP governments on NAFTA during the campaign and neither was satisfied with the late and limited initiative announced by Ontario Premier Bob Rae.[140]

In the period following the mobilization against the GST, the Pro-Canada Network engaged a series of critical issues and moved from campaign to campaign, building both an impressive public profile and a broad political discourse. Still, despite an intensity of activity that would have been hard to predict from the vantage point of the PCN's humble beginnings in April 1987, the ACN's second engagement with electoral politics would be much less impressive than its first. As Tony Clarke wrote to the ACN Operations Committee on 30 June 1993:

> A year ago at the Vancouver Assembly I was given a clear mandate to continue at the helm of the ACN up to and through the federal election. One year later, I find myself preoccupied with the question of whether the ACN will be able to emerge from the '93 election on a solid footing for the political challenges that lie ahead.[141]

The next chapter will review the development of the Network focusing on a few key themes and issues in an attempt to understand this progression.

Secretary Treasurer Julie Davis who, at the same time, was chair of the Network's operations committee.

[140] On the Ontario Government's initiative including of variety of anti-NAFTA measures and a court challenge, see "Remarks by the Honourable Bob Rae, Premier of Ontario and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs: Statement to the Legislature Regarding the North American Free Trade Agreement," 13 October 1993; On the federal NDP's reaction, see McLeod, *Under Siege: the Federal NDP in the Nineties.* The ACN put as positive a light on the Ontario initiative as possible in its official response, see ACN, "Ontario Court Challenge Key to Stopping NAFTA," 13 October 1993. Assessment of ACN reaction is from personal interviews with key participants. Earlier ACN hopes for provincial government action to buttress opposition to NAFTA is expressed in "Round Two Begins" and was an ongoing element in the Network's anti-NAFTA campaign through 1991-1993.

[141] Tony Clarke, Memorandum to Operations Committee, 30 June 1993.

Chapter 7

Discourse and the Structure of Agency

1. Introduction

As in December 1988, the top item on the agenda for the ACN's Twenty-second Assembly (5-7 November 1993 in Ottawa) was a review of the just concluded federal election campaign and its results. Whereas the election of a majority Conservative government in 1988 was a clear defeat for the PCN and its opposition to the FTA, in 1993 Canadians overwhelmingly rejected the same government, whose agenda and policies the Network had contested for half a decade. The majority popular vote for parties opposed to the FTA was the silver lining in the 1988 results for the PCN. Perhaps just as importantly, the anti-free trade movement felt it had played a central role in initiating a public debate that was unprecedented in recent Canadian history. In contrast, the 1993 contest delivered a solid majority government to a political party the Network no longer viewed as an ally, after a campaign that lacked the broad public engagement and passionate debate that took place five years earlier.

The post-election assembly was held within weeks of the election in keeping with a decision made in early October 1992.[1] The event was well attended with representation from most member groups and featured a panel presentation by leaders of some major national organizations. CLC president Bob White pledged continuing support for coalition building and the ACN against the backdrop of the NDP's poor results, which he viewed as a major setback for the labour movement. White, simultaneously, expressed satisfaction at "dumping the Tories" and questioned the prospects for continuing opposition to the Canada-U.S. FTA.[2] Speaking for NAC, Vice-President Sheilagh Day raised concerns about representation at the Network table. Her comment that "there is a problem with who is here and who is not here,"

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[1] The ACN National Campaign Plan presented to the Nineteenth Assembly (October 2-3, 1992 in Charlottetown) included a commitment to hold an Assembly within two weeks of a federal election to develop post-election strategy. In contrast, in November 1988 the continued existence of PCN was not universally assumed.

[2] In his address to the Assembly White remarked: "the trade agreement has integrated us with the U.S. and frankly I don't think we are going to be able to undo it." From a verbatim transcript of the panel session at the ACN's Twenty-second Assembly, November 1993.

reflected her organization's passionate commitment to 'cultural diversity.' Day also argued that any further organizational consolidation of the ACN should proceed cautiously, if at all. In her own words, "we work best when we come together on a specific issue, the extra parliamentary voice must be fast moving and free wheeling." Meanwhile, a representative of the Coalition québecoise suggested that its relationship with the ACN once again be reconsidered, inferring that a more clearly binational structure might now be preferable.[3]

Along with the election results, the tone for the Assembly was set by Tony Clarke's resignation as ACN chair. After the high point of the cross-country caravan and Parliament Hill rally in the spring of 1993, the Network had gone through a difficult summer period. With an election looming, a number of organizational issues and tensions reached the boiling point prompting Clarke to tender his resignation to take effect after the campaign. Clarke's departure was a spur to some soul searching on the part of delegates, aided by his parting reflections presented to the Assembly and released as "Action Canada: the Makings of a Movement."[4]

Clarke's paper and presentation avoided some of the specific issues and tensions that had prompted his resignation. Instead, he broached larger questions reflecting both his own continuing dedication to the project of building a national coalition with a broad mandate and his growing doubts about similar commitment from some key national organizations. Clarke argued that it was time to ask whether the "member groups have the political will and commitment to ensure that the ACN is equipped to carry out this mission."[5]

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[3] From a verbatim transcript of the panel session at the ACN's Twenty-second Assembly, November 1993.

[4] As early as August 1992 there was a shared sense among its leadership that the ACN was not well prepared for upcoming challenges. From Clarke's perspective, "NAFTA was barrelling down the tracks and we weren't confronting it very effectively." Quoted from Clarke, Interview by author. A special two-day strategy session was convened though correspondence in ACN files indicates that opinion was divided on its usefulness.

[5] Tony Clarke, "Action Canada: the Makings of a Movement," ACN, Ottawa, November 1993; Clarke, Interview by author.

To understand how the Network moved so rapidly from success to an apparent 'fall from grace,' this chapter will review the development of the PCN/ACN focusing on its evolving mandate, discourse, structure and resource base. It will trace these questions through three roughly determined periods in the Network's short history: from its formation to the 1988 election, from the post-election decision to broaden the mandate until Tony Clarke's assumption of the position of chairperson on a full-time basis (Summer 1992), and finally, from that point until the post-election Assembly held in November 1993. Following these themes through the phases of the Pro-Canada/Action Canada Network's development will lay the basis for a return to the questions concerning the potential of coalitions of social movements to constitute political agency that were posed at the outset of this paper.

2. From the Canada Summit to the Free Trade election

2.1 Mandate and Discourse

The Pro-Canada Network was formed around a single issue with a narrow mandate to oppose the proposed Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement.[6] Two dominant organizations guided a cautious approach to alliance building. The CLC insisted on defining the endeavour as a network rather than a coalition, while the Council of Canadians, the sponsor of the Canada Summit, was animated by a relatively narrow nationalist agenda.[7] Nevertheless, an advancing FTA and the Network's own successes rapidly expanded its tactical repertoire transforming it from a place for information sharing to the locus for collective analysis of the agreement and the formulation of joint communication and action strategies.

At this early stage, the PCN's discourse largely reflected the consensus established at the Canada Summit in April 1987. Its public pronouncements and publications referred to the FTA as the "Mulroney-Reagan deal" or the "Mulroney-Reagan agreement." This nomenclature was chosen for a number of reasons. First, the

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[6] See PCN, "Canada Summit Declaration."

[7] See the section on the Canada Summit in Chapter 4 above.

personalization of the agreement was an attempt to benefit from the increasingly poor public perception of Prime Minister Mulroney. Second, and similarly, the reference to U.S. president Reagan was a simple means to label the FTA as a product of the neo-conservative worldview.[8] In addition, the Reagan administration's record in revitalizing U.S. interventionism and imperial aspirations, most notably in the Americas, was particularly worrying from a Canadian nationalist perspective. Stamping the agreement in this way also echoed the general reticence of opponents to directly challenge the concept of free trade. At a superficial level, they were wary of its positive connotations. More fundamentally, key sectors and organizations remained undecided about trade liberalization *per se*. Their commitment through the PCN was to opposing the specific bilateral agreement between the American elephant and the Canadian mouse. The CLC and the Council of Canadians, among others, remained generally positive about the prospects for multilateral trade negotiations under the aegis of the GATT.[9]

As the FTA came closer to fruition with the completion of a draft text, and as a federal election approached in 1988, references to the Free Trade Deal became more frequent. This shift stemmed in part from recognition that campaigning on the issue had boosted its profile and that public opinion was gradually turning against free trade. Though the PCN's primary focus was increasingly on the threat posed to Canadian social programmes, despite the contention of some observers, including from a class-analytical perspective, the Network's critique of the FTA was never entirely limited to a defence of social entitlement.[10] Certainly the theme in the anti-free trade repertoire that most clearly struck a chord with public opinion quite naturally came to dominate the PCN's pronouncements, and thus its nascent discourse. Nevertheless, the internal analysis and critique of the FTA undertaken by

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[8] This is in keeping with Breton and Jenson's argument that "in terms of the anti-deal campaign, government and business enthusiasm for free trade was an expression of neo-liberal faith in market forces, and in particular the 'Reaganesque' version of that faith." Breton and Jenson, "After Free Trade and Meech Lake: Quoi de neuf?" 209.

[9] See Chapters 3 and 4 above.

[10] For the class-analytical critique of the PCN and its politics, see Chapter 2 above.

the Network was both broader and more nuanced. It could hardly have been otherwise given the variety of sectors engaged in the process and the influence of groups that, like GATT-Fly, brought with them radical critiques of trade liberalization. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the mingling and melding of different sectoral perspectives with traditional nationalist and other progressive worldviews created a learning process and a dynamic of discovery and radicalization.

Meanwhile free trade opponents emphasized traditional democratic themes in their contestation of the FTA; the demand for a federal election before signature of the treaty was followed by the call for an election before implementation once the parties initialled the agreement. The repertoire of tactics employed to advance these demands ranged from petitions and lobbies of parliamentarians to public events, all supported by a collective pool of research and analysis.

2.2 Structure and Resources

The new Network's structure reflected both the limits of its mandate and its evolving role. By the fall of 1987, three working committees (research, communications and strategy) were added to the broader Assembly of all member organizations. Like the Assembly, these committees constituted the "neutral territory" where difference could be viewed creatively rather than as a threat.[11] This was no small feat since the PCN faced the decidedly mixed legacy of coalition building, a variety of conflicts between and within sectors, as well as serious discrepancies in power between member groups.[12] The overwhelming size and potential strength of the CLC was a concern, but so was the tendency of the Toronto-based CAFT, with its strong organizational backing and key actors, to dominate the agenda.[13] Despite these

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[11] From a phrase used by Laurell Ritchie to describe the objectives of the founders of the Toronto-based CAFT quoted in Chapter 3 above.

[12] See Chapters 1, 2 and 3 above.

[13] Based on personal interviews with various participants. Tony Clarke, for example, recalls a critical moment during the planning of the May 1988 parliamentary lobby when the CLC and the CAFT clashed. "The big player at this time, organizationally, was certainly the CLC. The difficulty was that no one player should be able to call all the shots. We had to make sure that there were ways that we could work out problems, tensions and conflicts. Some organizations had as much to contribute in terms of ideas, proposals, participation of their own people to some extent, but could not mobilize the

challenges, the PCN table soon became recognized, as one activist put it, as "the one place in the country where we could all come together."[14]

After the Canada Summit, the inclusion of provincial coalitions in the fall of 1987 was the next key moment in the development of the PCN. Provincial participation made the Network more representative of Canadian geographic, and consequently political, reality thus enhancing its legitimacy.[15] In turn, the PCN's capacity to act was increased, improving its ability to deliver a nation-wide campaign and bolstering its credibility in confronting a neo-conservative project built, in part, on regional antagonisms.[16] Bringing provincial coalitions to the table also introduced a new structural complexity – in effect, two tiers of membership – to an extremely flexible organizational configuration. In response, a new Steering Committee was formed with representation from all participating sectors as well as the Ontario and Québec coalitions.[17]

At this stage in its development, the PCN's structure included an explicitly collective leadership model. Two co-chairs of the Assembly were joined by four spokespersons reflecting sectoral diversity, as well as co-chairs for each of the committees. While collective leadership reflected the cautious approach and narrow mandate adopted at the Canada Summit, it also served a number of other objectives.

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financial resources or the numbers of people that the CLC could. We also had to deal with the tendency for the Toronto coalition with a strong set of actors to set the agenda. So there was a lot of balancing and there were moments where the thing almost fell apart. One of these came around the planning of the May lobby meeting on Parliament Hill. There were different models. The CLC came in with a model. The Toronto CAFT came in with a different model. There was a real clash and we had to have a special meeting to hammer it out in Toronto. Even then the resolution wasn't satisfactory. We were feeling each other out. It was very difficult to keep the egos and the organizational power struggles in check." Clarke, Interview by author.

[14] Bob Ages, Interview by author, Winnipeg, 7 December 1991.

[15] A similar process took place with addition of explicit regional representation to the NAC executive. As Vickers et al. conclude, "NAC recognized that organizing women across space was almost as important as organizing them across time." In Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women*, 286.

[16] See Chapter 4 above.

[17] Compared to the variety of groups and individuals included in NAC's membership the Network's two tiers could hardly be considered a serious obstacle. On the structure of the National Action Committee, see Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.*

First, collective leadership and diverse representation advanced the coalition building process by providing member organizations and some of their leaders with public visibility. Second, multiplying the number of positions within the Network was useful in maximizing volunteer commitment. Last but far from least, assigning several spokespersons from different sectors was a means to make 'the medium the message' in external representation of the Network. The underlying premise was that the PCN's breadth and diversity was an inherent strength. More specifically, the multi-sectoral and broadly based nature of the opposition to the FTA, as reflected in the Network's membership, was an indicator of the scope of the flaws in the agreement. In the same vein, PCN news releases consistently referred to the "more than 10 million Canadians" represented by its member groups.[18]

But for some of those relating to the PCN the collective model of leadership was not always entirely welcome. For example, while the media might be impressed by the size and scope of the coalition that had been assembled, participating in news conferences with a multiplicity of spokespersons was another matter. In a study of the UK peace movement the media's instinct is neatly summarized as follows: "Faced with a demonstration, the first thing ... a journalist is trained to look for is a leader."[19] Over time, the pressure of traditional media demands would take their toll on the PCN's leadership model.

In contrast to most Canadian organizations – and indeed to the vast the majority of its member groups – the PCN engaged in decision-making by consensus. The process was a far cry from the often paralysing quest for consensus in radical feminist practice and much closer to the decision-making and leadership style developed in the coalition building work of the ecumenical social justice sector.[20]

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[18] Based on a review of news releases issued by the Network between 1987 and 1993 in PCN/ACN files.

[19] Quoted in M. Helen Brown, "Organizing Activity in the Women's Movement: An Example of Distributed Leadership," in *Organizing for Change: Social Movement Organizations in Europe and the United States*, ed. Bert Klandermans, *International Social Movement Research* (Greenwich Ct: JAI Press, 1989).

[20] See Chapter 3 above. On feminist decision-making models and leadership styles, see Vickers,

Tony Clarke – Network co-chair from fall 1987 to summer 1988, acting chair from summer 1988 to fall 1988 and chair from fall 1988 to fall 1993 – was a key actor in ecumenical coalition circles.[21] As practiced by Clarke, consensus building was a pro-active and time-consuming task. The objective was to build a consensus that was expanding in scope and in content, not to identify and lock-in a 'lowest common denominator' agreement.[22]

While encouragement and support greeted the convenors of the Canada Summit, the financial resources to get the Network off the ground were far less forthcoming. During its first six months, the PCN received funding from half a dozen organizations though the bulk of its backing came from the Council of Canadians, including $28,000 and in-kind staffing. Other funds came from the Canadian Labour Congress ($5,000), the performers' union ACTRA ($5,000), the Canadian Teachers Federation ($1,500), the Québec coalition ($3,000) and the ecumenical coalition GATT-Fly ($500). In the following six-month period – November 1987 to May 1988 – the Council added a further $6,000, and the CLC another $5,000. Additional contributions were also received from ACTRA ($5,000), the Québec Coalition

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Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women;* see also Brown, "Organizing Activity in the Women's Movement: An Example of Distributed Leadership."

[21] Following his election as chair of the Council of Canadians in the Fall of 1987, John Trent submitted his resignation as PCN co-chair to the Steering Committee. Tony Clarke accepted the committee's offer to replace Trent and recalls setting a number of priorities. These included, a broadening of the Network to include regional coalitions, limiting the importance of 'personalities,' emphasizing facilitating participation by member groups, and his own preference not to be involved in external representation. After deciding to seek a Liberal nomination, Maude Barlow resigned as the Network's second co-chair in June 1988. At this point Tony Clarke remains as 'administrative co-chair' and a proposal to appoint four sectoral co-chair/spokespersons is ratified. From Clarke, Interview by author and Trent, Interview by author.

[22] Participants in the process praise Clarke's ability to generate a consensus that went beyond the lowest common denominator. Clarke's personal commitment to a broadly mandated coalition of the popular sector was evident during the pre-PCN period. See Chapter 1 above.

The concept of leaders as 'bridge builders' described in the American context provides an interesting parallel to the facilitating role favoured by Clarke during this period. See Brecher and Costello, *Building Bridges: the Emerging Grassroots Coalition of Labor and Community* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), 335.

In a study of the US Rainbow Coalition, Collins elaborates as follows: "Bridge-builders must not only buck the structural arrangements designed to isolate racial/ethnic communities from one another, but the internal defensive mechanisms built into each oppressed community that make it hard for it to enter into power-sharing arrangements with others." In Sheila D. Collins, *The Rainbow Challenge* (New York, N.Y.: Monthly Review Press, 1986), 115.

($3,000) and the National Federation of Nurses Unions ($1,000) for total annual revenues of $63,000.[23] At the Fourth Assembly in June 1988 member groups were notified that last minute contributions from the Federation of Women's Teachers of Ontario ($10,000) and business executive Frank Stronach ($5,000) had staved off insolvency.[24] During the summer of 1988, the Network benefited from a direct mail fundraising campaign coordinated on its behalf by the Toronto-based CAFT with in-kind assistance from a number of member groups.[25]

With limited resources, the Network was largely dependent on a variety of in-kind contributions. According to a report to the Sixth Assembly in December 1988 these contributions were generously considered equal to between six and nine full or part-time staff from November 1987 to November 1988. The Network was equally reliant on member groups for its physical space. For its first year, the PCN was run out of the small Council of Canadians' Ottawa office, moving into the library of the CCCB Social Affairs office after the hiring of its first full-time staff person in July 1988. Finally, with preparations for the federal election well in train, the PCN took over the storage space in the office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives as its 'headquarters' one month later. There, the Network's activities rapidly expanded, eventually filling half of the space in the CCPA's locale.[26]

Other in-kind contributions included office materials, translation and printing services. Last but certainly not least, Toronto-based GATT-Fly produced and distributed the *Pro-Canada Dossier*, until March 1988 as its own independent publication under the title *Free Trade Action Dossier*. GATT-Fly put forward two central reasons for the name change. First, to draw attention to the broad nature of the proposed FTA that was not so much about freeing up trade between the two countries as it was about full-scale economic deregulation. Second, GATT-Fly hoped to

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[23] PCN, "General Review of Finances and Resources," December 1989.

[24] Fourth Assembly Minutes.

[25] Traynor, Interview by author.

[26] Barlow, Interview by author; Clarke, Interview by author; Diane Touchette, Interview by author, Ottawa, 5 April 1997.

establish the *Dossier* "as the link between all the national and regional organizations fighting the Mulroney deal that are part of the Pro-Canada Network." At the same time, GATT-Fly reiterated that the *Dossier* "would not necessarily represent the official position of the Pro-Canada Network" but rather be a contribution "to the collective effort through the Pro-Canada Network to defeat the Mulroney-Reagan deal."[27] This was an important distinction since from the *Dossier*'s inception GATT-Fly had put forward its support for an economic development strategy rooted in self-reliance and critiqued multilateral trade liberalization through the GATT in its pages.[28] Two issues after being renamed, the *Dossier* sported the Pro-Canada Network's logo on its front page.[29] Then, after the December 1988 Assembly decision to maintain the Network and enhance its capacity, production of the *Dossier* was transferred to the PCN's Ottawa office, though GATT-Fly continued to contribute an analysis section for the next few months. A new web of in-kind resources was established to assist with production: CUPW provided access to equipment necessary to desktop publish the *Dossier* while printing was done by the PSAC.[30]

3. Post-Election to the Summer of 1992

3.1 Mandate and Discourse

From the explicitly limited commitment to opposing a bilateral free trade agreement noted in the "Canada Summit Declaration," the Network extended its post-election mandate to engaging in "a struggle to ensure that Canada's future is shaped by and for people not profits."[31] This shift was assisted by two important factors. First, participants in the campaign against the FTA had been marked by the extent of the intervention by the Canadian corporate sector. This glimpse of economic power

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[27] "From the editor..." *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 4 March 1988.

[28] For an example of this usage, see "GATT Will Get Us Too," *Free Trade Action Dossier*, 18 December 1987.

[29] *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 29 April 1988.

[30] Howlett, Interview by author; Clarke, Interview by author; Rocks, Interview by author.

[31] The *Pro-Canada Dossier*'s masthead adopted this statement as of March 1989.

openly wielded to influence a democratic decision-making process had a tremendous impact. Rather than leading to a retreat into apathy, the experience underscored the large stakes involved in the FTA fight making different sectors more receptive to a systemic or structural analysis.[32]

Second, in the aftermath of the election and the implementation of the FTA beginning in January 1989, labour and social groups were shifting their focus to their own defensive struggles. The *Pro-Canada Dossier* anticipated this development when it argued the case for solidarity through coalition in its post-election issue:

> Consciousness-raising about social and economic issues related to the free trade deal is not enough. It will be important to develop the capacity to respond collectively to plant closures, threats to regional programs or farm marketing boards, and so on. We must not allow capital to divide and conquer. Many are going to be hurt by the FTA experiment. We need to pull together in defending against these attacks.[33]

The *Dossier*'s message centred on the specific consequences of the FTA but also put forward a more fundamental objective – linking the "changes which happen as a result of the FTA" with the "overall neo-conservative agenda of Canadian and U.S. capital."[34] The first "fightbacks" supported by the PCN were responses to direct and immediate consequences of the FTA such as plant closures and job losses. Soon these were planned in reaction to public policy measures that were related to the FTA or simply part of the broader social and economic model with, as the PCN now argued, free trade at its centre.[35] Organizations brought specific issues to the Network table and, where possible, through discussion and active intervention by the chair, linkages were developed resulting in collective interventions or campaigns. For example, women's program and VIA Rail cuts in the 1989 federal budget led to the Campaign to the Get the Budget on Track in 1989.[36]

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[32] See Chapter 5 above.

[33] "The Struggle Enters a New Phase."

[34] Ibid.

[35] Clarke, Interview by author; see also Chapter 2 above.

[36] Groups formed out of the culture of support for citizen's participation of the Pearson and early Trudeau eras and dependent on state funding or otherwise prey to government interference were particularly vulnerable during this period (see Chapter 1 above). Even before cuts to NAC's budget in

The call for defensive mutual support issued in the post-election *Pro-Canada Dossier* was rooted in the politics of social solidarity advocated by GATT-Fly and the broader ecumenical coalition sector. Social solidarity was also an important element in the development of the broader popular sector leading to the formation of the Working Committee for Social Solidarity (WCSS) in 1986 and the launch of the declaration *A Time to Stand Together... A Time for Social Solidarity* in December 1987. Rather than a simple defensive rational choice response to a perceived threat, social solidarity was premised on a collective commitment to transformative social change and to the convergence of interests and movements as the agency or vehicle for this change.[37] As Tony Clarke would later write in "Action Canada: the Makings of a Movement":

> The capacity and strength of the ACN to carry out its mission always depended on its member organizations and constituencies. From the beginning, it was understood that no one sector or organization could effectively fight the corporate agenda alone. Only in unity would there be strength. The central organizing principle has been 'social solidarity.'[38]

Beyond a reflexive solidarity, attention to sectoral fightbacks reflected the commitment to movement convergence as the vehicle for confronting a common enemy and bringing about social transformation. Including the specific defensive struggles waged by member groups on the collective agenda was viewed as helpful to insuring support for the Network *per se* since its broader program was more attractive when it connected directly with the shorter term internal priorities of member organizations. Moreover, support was often dependent on the PCN's plans appearing to build on existing campaign efforts and resource allocations rather than opening up new obligations for these groups.[39]

February 1989 (see Chapter 5 above) the involuntary resignation of Dale Goldhawk as president of ACTRA, the union representing most Canadian performers on November 23, 1988 following an ultimatum from his employer the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was heralded as "the Tories first reprisal." ACTRA had been an active member of the Network. "The Tories First Reprisal," *Pro-Canada Dossier*, 16 December 1988.

[37] On the Working Committee for Social Solidarity, see Chapter 1.

[38] Clarke, "Action Canada: the Makings of a Movement."

[39] Clarke, Interview by author; McBane, Interview by author.

Until the 1988 Federal Election, explicit support for social solidarity and its implications for movement building and convergence came largely from within a few sectors and organizations, and often only from specific individuals including those participating in the WCSS. Collective analysis and coalition work around free trade, in the face of a dramatic closing of ranks by Canadian capital, contributed to a broader acceptance of a more radical critique of the social and economic conjuncture. It also further shifted support to movement building as the preferred political response from the Left.

By June 1990, when joint PCN and WCSS meetings were held outside Québec City, the Network's expanding mandate, tactics and shifting discourse had blurred the distinction between the two projects. Shortly thereafter, Mike McBane, formerly on staff with the CCCB and subsequently working part time for the WCSS, was hired as political action coordinator for the Network. McBane's move proved to be the last straw for the WCSS as well as a symbolic passing of the torch to the PCN. Where the WCSS had been limited to a small group of activists working with limited resources at arms-length from the day-to-day struggles of popular sector groups, the PCN now combined direct engagement in campaigns far beyond NAFTA with a nascent focus on policy alternatives.[40]

The renaming of the Network in April 1991 was emblematic of a continuing tension between defensive struggles building on the FTA experience, and the commitment to developing a new social project closer to the objectives of the WCSS. The newly minted Action Canada Network reaffirmed the defensive function as part of its core mandate, if anything deepening this commitment by making explicit its

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[40] As late as December 1990 the WCSS was still meeting and debating its future. In reality, deprived of resources and in the PCN's growing shadow the Committee had few options. See WCSS, Minutes of Meeting, 13 December 1990. A confidential memorandum between labour officials provides a vivid picture of the background negotiations around the WCSS. Its portrayal of intra-labour disagreements with regard to the WCSS and more specifically coalition-building *writ large* is particularly interesting. For example, the author indicates that the CLC's representative at a WCSS meeting suggested that the Congress "had to be concerned about conserving its resources for the big election campaigns and that it therefore had to be careful not to exhaust its limited resources in support of coalitions." John Calvert, CUPE, Memorandum to Peggy Nash, CAW, 10 April 1989.

intention to use these activities as a tool to attract new sectors and organizations to the fold.[41] Identifying no less than nineteen different "fightback struggles" that its member groups were engaged in, the ACN's May 1991 Action Plan was framed as an attempt "to pull all of this together into a common action campaign that is focused on Canada's future."[42]

The increasing scope of the Network's mandate after the 1988 election brought with it a shift in discourse. Opposition to the threat posed by the "Reagan-Mulroney agreement" gave way to a wider though clearly still defensive battle against the "Tory agenda."[43] With its renaming, the Network confirmed the place of the free

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[41] See the statement released by the ACN at its launch, "Introducing ... the Action Canada Network," Ottawa, April 1990; see also Goar, "Why Pro-Canada Group Changed its Name."

[42] ACN, "1991 Action Plan."

Despite these grand ambitions the most important example of support for member groups initiated by the ACN was marshalled for strikes by two public sector unions, CUPW and the PSAC, both already strong supporters of the Network. Nevertheless these strikes were noteworthy both for the innovative approach employed to demonstrate cross-sectoral solidarity and for the success of these efforts as judged by the unions themselves.

The discussion of plans for solidarity with CUPW is in PCN Thirteenth Assembly Summary; Development of plans for support to PSAC, including a pamphlet linking the "corporate agenda to the attack on the public sector" and an ad featuring ACN member group leaders stating their support for the PSAC in PCN Thirteenth Assembly Summary; see also various minutes of Steering Committee Meetings in ACN files.

In "Coalitions Deliver for Postal Workers," *ACN Dossier*, May-June 1992, CUPW vice-president Deborah Bourque describes the solidarity pacts her union signed with other ACN member groups. The union agreed to deliver pension and social assistance cheques while on strike and oppose closures to rural post offices and "in return, each of these groups made a commitment to CUPW to talk about our issues within their organizations, to encourage their members to refuse to be used as scabs...and to support us on the picket line." Bourque concludes that while the "the expression of solidarity largely ignored by the media, it provided an important message for our members, who now feel more at home with coalitions." While the solidarity pacts were suggested by ACN chair Tony Clarke, CUPW was no stranger to work with community sector groups. Bickerton, Interview by author. See Chapter 3 above on the union's groundbreaking strike for paid maternity leave in 1982. As Bourque points out, CUPW continued to work in coalitions, in 1984-85 with unemployed workers and in 1987-88 as part of a campaign to protect and expand postal service.

Similarly, reviewing his own unions experience in 1991, PSAC president Daryl Bean concludes "our experience working within the ACN during the 1991 PSAC strike augurs well for the future." In Daryl Bean, "Standing Together for Public Services," *ACN Dossier*, May-June 1992.

[43] Terminology usage was not entirely consistent. While the term "Tory Agenda" appears most frequently there are also references to the "neo-conservative agenda" in various materials and in particular in meeting reports. Use of this latter term reflects the direction of the underlying shift in the Network's consensus: i.e., toward a more systemic or structural critique. The shift is summed up in a report from a labour representative to her union's national leadership on the PCN's status in late 1989: "We all seem to be on the same wavelength (i.e., free trade is just part of the Tory agenda. It helps them to achieve their goals for a more market oriented society) but our efforts seem a bit fragmented and uncoordinated." Peggy Nash, Memorandum to Bob White, Bob Nickerson, and Sam Gindin, 24 October 1989.

trade deal as the "centrepiece of the corporate agenda."[44] By the spring of 1991, the Network was also focused on remedying its widely acknowledged failure to move beyond a defensive posture *vis-à-vis* the FTA in 1988, when it was "united around a defence of what had been, rather than an alternative vision of the future."[45] As the announcement of the launch of the 'new' Network argued: "Since the signing of the Free trade Agreement the Network has continued to develop a critical analysis of the corporate agenda and mobilize public support for alternative economic and social policy directions."[46] By this time, the new relationship with Mexican free trade opponents was goading forward the ACN's consideration of alternative models for trade and development and the Network was on the eve of welcoming discussion and debate of substantive alternative constitutional models (i.e., three nations and asymmetrical federalism) to its table.

While the progression was far from uninterrupted, the Network's agenda was shifting from a reactive single-issue basis for unity to a larger mandate that identified a broad social project as its target and attempted to develop and articulate alternatives both in the form and the content of its activities.[47] Still, overwhelming defensive demands were everywhere: the driving force behind the Network's trade work was opposition to NAFTA while its engagement with the constitution was inspired by the federal government's introduction of package of reforms with strongly neo-conservative policy objectives.

3.2 Structure and Resources

The December 1988 Assembly decision to broaden the Network's agenda and continue its activities was accompanied by a determination to expand its

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[44] ACN, "Introducing the... Action Canada Network."

[45] Jane Jenson and Rianne Mahon, "Legacies for Canadian Labour of Two Decades of Crisis," in *The Challenge of Restructuring: North American Labor Movements Respond*, ed. Jane Jenson and Rianne Mahon, *Labor and Social Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 85.

[46] ACN, "Introducing the... Action Canada Network."

[47] The ACN Action Plan adopted in August 1991 proposes a "three prong campaigning agenda" including trade, solidarity or fightbacks and the constitution.

organizational capacity. The Assembly adopted a proposal for a six-month operational budget of $40,000 though hopes were expressed that it could be amended upwards. In order to give the Network a more substantial and permanent institutional base, the Assembly also agreed to seek regular sustaining funding from member organizations.[48] The newly formed Operations Committee chose to maintain a pay-what-you-can structure for membership contributions from labour and community groups despite arguments for a more formalized system.[49] Within this framework, a conscious effort was made to balance more plentiful labour dollars with support from community sector groups. Specifically, the committee targeted a 60/40 split between labour and community funding. As the cuts in funding to advocacy groups in the 1989 federal budget took effect, this ratio shifted closer to 70/30.[50]

Fundraising was further complicated by the responsibility the Network now assumed for the $100,000-plus debt incurred through the production and distribution of the cartoon booklet. This was a sizable burden for an organization trying to raise a semi-annual operating budget of less than $50,000. As a first step, some member groups – the CAW in particular – were convinced to carry the debt interest-free. Once this was accomplished the debt was owed to key member groups on whom the PCN also depended for a large part of its for sustaining funding making a clear compartmentalization of debt repayment and operational funding essential.

The cartoon booklet debt was a new and important factor forcing the Network to engage in debt reduction and colouring future organizational and strategic decisions. The spectre of the debt became an increasingly important disciplinary tool wielded by the chair of the Operations Committee. Dealing with the debt became an ongoing long-term test of the PCN's organizational credibility as well as a collective

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[48] PCN Sixth Assembly Summary.

[49] For example, the Manitoba Coalition against Free Trade called for "a flexible sustainer system of grants with organizational commitments in writing." Other suggestions included an annual levy based on membership (i.e., per capita). In ibid.

[50] PCN, Operations Committee Notes, January 1989; this downward trend did not end since in 1992 more than 80% of membership revenues were obtained from labour groups. ACN files.

psychological millstone; a mantra to be recalled and recited before any new substantial project could be considered.[51] Paradoxically, the debt might have also had a positive effect on the PCN's growth by providing a fiscal rationale for the further development or, at the very least, the maintenance of organizational capacity. The commitment to pay back the debt created a constituency of narrow self-interest among groups to whom the debt was now owed, on top of the broader self-interest of participants hoping to protect the Network's credibility within their own sectoral organizations, and a collective sense of obligation.[52]

The December 1988 Assembly had expressed enthusiastic support for building the PCN's organizational base, accepted responsibility for the cartoon booklet debt, and committed to finding the resources to meet both objectives.[53] However, only four months later, as debt repayment slowly proceeded, the Network faced a severe crisis in operational funding and the prospect of a shut down of its operations.[54] The enthusiasm expressed at the Assembly was proving difficult to translate into real resources. Serious financial constraints limited the ability of most community sector groups to contribute and, in many cases, their situation worsened after the February 1989 federal budget.[55] There were also considerable obstacles to raising funds within the labour movement. Unions were anticipating their own financial difficulties as trade liberalization and an economic slowdown drove employment down, deeply affecting their dues base. There was also wariness about the prospect of a well resourced and consequently somewhat less dependent PCN from the CLC leadership and some major trade unions affiliated to the Congress.[56]

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[51] Traynor, Interview by author; Rocks, Interview by author.

[52] The debt was finally retired late in 1992. Julie Davis, "Operations Committee Report to Twentieth ACN Assembly," Ottawa, 29-31 January 1993. Debt repayment took place gradually fuelled by a series of in house direct mail campaigns. The revenue from these mailings was kept scrupulously separate from operational funds. Rocks, Interview by author.

[53] PCN Sixth Assembly Summary.

[54] See Tony Clarke, Memorandum to Member Organizations, 24 May 1989.

[55] See Chapter 5 above.

[56] Bickerton, Interview by author and Turk, Interview by author.

In response, the Network appealed to the labour movement for funding targeted at campaigns rather than general operations. This approach garnered some support for the 1989 Budget campaign but was most notably effective with the Campaign for Fair Taxes.[57] Combined with some growth in membership contributions, campaign funding contributed to the Network's growing organizational capacity through 1989 and 1990. By 1991, the PCN sported its own national office, three full-time staff persons and a projected total operating budget of $162,352.[58]

The broadening of the Network's mandate from 1988 to 1991 had, in turn, attracted a somewhat larger membership. The Campaign for Fair Taxes was particularly important in this regard, rekindling the involvement of some member groups and attracting some new support. By engaging activists at all levels of the labour movement, the campaign increased pressure on some unions to support the PCN and participate in its activities leading to involvement from unions like the Canadian Conference of Teamsters and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). At the same time, a number of non-labour groups worked with the Network for the first time under the banner of the Campaign for Fair Taxes.[59]

While PCN publications repeatedly claimed a growing membership during this period, the process is more accurately portrayed as an ebbing and flowing with gains that were often short-lived. By 1991, the Network was marginally broader in terms of sectoral participation and total membership, though the level of commitment and participation by new sectors and organizations varied widely, as it also did for some sectors and groups that had been at the table from the start.[60]

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[57] See Chapter 5 above.

[58] ACN, "Operating Budget," 1991.

[59] See list of participating organizations, PCN files: Cooperative Housing Federation, *Fédération nationale des associations de consommateurs du Québec*, Movement for Canadian Literacy, Canadian Federation of Students, Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association, Don't Tax Reading Coalition, Coalition of Provincial Organizations for the Handicapped, Federal Superannuates National Association.

[60] Based on records of attendance at Assemblies and the list of member organizations maintained by the Network secretariat. For example, both the Canadian Teachers Federation and the National Farmers Union downgraded their involvement while the Business Council for Fair Trade was an early casualty of the broader post-1988 Network agenda.

This period of growth in mandate, membership and resource base was also marked by changes to the Network's structure. At the leadership level, Maude Barlow's decision to seek the Liberal Party nomination in an Ottawa riding in the fall of 1988 left the PCN with one co-chair through the election period. While unplanned and not formally acknowledged, this led to the effective abandonment of the co-chairing model. In addition, the need and the opportunity for the Network to develop its organizational profile and the pressures of the mainstream media drove a gradual shift away from the collective approach to external representation.

With the notable exception of the formation of a new Operations Committee reflecting the commitment to growth in organizational capacity, the working committee structure developed little during this period though the Network's campaign activities did lead to some structural experimentation. For the Campaign to Get the Budget on Track, member groups, in this case NAC, and to a lesser extent the CBRTGW, initiated an action and looked to the Network to provide coordination. The Campaign for Fair Taxes built on this example generating a new organizational model for campaigns. Its structure, topped off by three co-chairs representing the PCN, the CLC and the Québec coalition, was something of a compromise. According the CLC equivalent status with the Network as a whole reflected a realistic assessment by community groups of their relative lack of resources. It also assured the most important funder a high profile in the campaign. Similarly, accepting the Network on par with the Congress stemmed from the labour leadership's recognition of the value of joint mobilizing with the community sector. Finally, the inclusion of the Québec coalition grew out of some understanding of binational realities by all parties. Nevertheless, the fact that the Campaign for Fair Taxes model only developed following a negative reaction to the CLC's initial proposal for a campaign against the GST, and as a result of a subsequent intervention by the Network's chair, serves as

yet another a potent reminder of the tenuous and contingent character of the coalition process.[61]

The ACN played a very different role on the constitutional issue where it was prevented from organizing, or leading, a campaign by the absence of a membership consensus. The Network parlayed its neutral territory, first, into a tool for generating interest in the Charlottetown Accord and, second, by dint of facilitating debate and discussion within the popular sector during the referendum campaign, into what some considered to be moral or *de facto* support for the NO position.[62]

The renaming and apparent restructuring of the Network in April 1991 would appear to constitute the most fundamental change to the Network's organizational structure during this period. The implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on Canada-Québec Relations was a result of a growing comprehension of the binational dynamic at the heart of the popular sector. However, the actual model adopted – i.e., according a form of special status to Québec groups within the Network – seemed predestined to perpetuate confusion rather than lead by example. The new format changed very little in terms of day-to-day operations and proved far more symbolic than substantive in all other regards. As we will see below, the few material changes that were implemented – e.g. increased representation for Québec on the Steering Committee, a Québec-based spokesperson for the Network, and a Québec version of the Dossier – either failed to get off the ground, or quickly foundered. In this instance, it would appear that the Network failed to move much beyond a lowest common denominator consensus – albeit on a complex matter and facing a number of difficult variables. Still, given the critical historical juncture, it is possible that a significant opportunity passed without being seized.

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[61] See Chapter 5 above.

[62] McBane, Interview by author; see also Chapter 6 above.

4. From Full-time Chair to No Chair

4.1 Mandate and Discourse

One year after its renaming, the constitution and NAFTA topped the Network's agenda. Tony Clarke agreed to take up the role of chairperson on a full-time basis in the early summer of 1992. Embroiled in internal battles at the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Clarke had negotiated an eighteen-month leave of absence from his position as co-director of the Social Affairs Office.[63] The shift in Clarke's status had far-reaching consequences for the ACN. While his greater availability increased capacity, it also dramatically raised expectations. Requests for representation and outreach, both domestic and trinational, were particularly pressing and occupied an increasing amount of the chair's time.

Clarke's role began evolving before he took up the chair on a full-time basis. The trinational relationship built up around NAFTA aided Clarke in overcoming his original reticence to represent the Network publicly. Beyond Canada's borders, the less than glamorous day-to-day difficulties associated with holding together a coalition of national organizations while armed with inadequate resources were largely left behind. When Clarke led delegations made up of leaders of major Canadian trade unions and other member groups he was much more likely to be regarded by Mexican and U.S. counterparts as the *capo di tutti capo* than would be the case on the home front.[64]

The most dramatic change in the Network's mandate took place immediately following the 1988 federal election campaign, and the transformation of PCN/ACN's discourse – i.e., from anti-FTA to anti-Tory to anti-corporate – was largely complete by 1992. Indeed, the demands made on Clarke once he assumed the ACN chair on a full-time basis were a reflection of the breadth of mandate and discourse. During this

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[63] Clarke was to receive 40 percent of his pay during this leave. The strain in Clarke's relationship with his employer was based in large part on his increasingly prominent public role with the Network. Clarke, Interview by author; see also Clarke, *Behind the Mitre: The Moral Leadership Crisis in the Canadian Catholic Church.*

[64] Sorenson, Interview by author.

next period, both were consolidated and deepened through campaigns and engagement with a wide range of issues. Nevertheless, as NAFTA moved to the forefront, the defensive battle against a trade agreement returned to centre stage. As the Conservative government approached the outer limit of its mandate, the demands of oppositional electoral politics undermined the nascent focus on alternatives that had been cultivated within the Network.

4.2 Structure and Resources

While Clarke's work as full-time chair did boost resources for the Network, the additional support garnered was far from exponential and consisted largely, if not entirely, of funding for specific projects.[65] Reflecting the failure to gain additional core funding and resources, a report on the state of the ACN concluded that "successful national campaigns and a high media profile have combined to encourage unreasonable demands on a group of the most dedicated and capable individuals in the country."[66]

In June 1993, hard on the heels of some of the ACN's most significant achievements, Tony Clarke informed the Operations Committee of his intention to resign. Clarke indicated that he was willing to continue as chair until after the next federal election if certain conditions were met.[67] Later, in a memo to the committee, Clarke laid out the "measures that need to be taken to strengthen the capacities of the ACN through this election period." These included immediately initiating a structural review, including an examination of the Network's relationship with Common

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[65] See, for example, the ACN Caravan and 15 May event above.

[66] Geoff Bickerton, "Report on ACN Issues," June 1993; the focus on project funding was in part making a virtue of necessity. Nonetheless, Mike McBane (political action coordinator 1990-1993) concedes that seeking both political and financial support on a project-by-project basis fit with his own preference for a task-oriented approach to coalition work. McBane, Interview by author.

Network membership revenue remained more or less static between 1991 and 1993 (i.e., ranging between $149,258 and $157,400). The fact that these revenues subsequently declined dramatically (i.e., 1994 - $147,826, 1995 - $139,158, 1996 - $121,325, and 1997 - $109,000) is worthy of note though beyond the purview of this account. In contrast, campaign funding rises from $45,000 in 1990 to $110,304 in 1993, dropping back to under $1,000 in 1994. Suzette Wollinger, Memorandum to Mandy Rocks, 1 February 1997.

[67] Interviews with meeting participants.

Frontiers, the CCPA as well as the Council of Canadians and the Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice (a renamed GATT-Fly); revitalizing the communications and research committees; and increasing clerical support and coordination in the ACN office. Finally, Clarke called for the reinstitution of the "Chair's travel fund."[68]

Clarke's frustration had been mounting for some time but came to a head over this last, to all appearances minor, issue. When he first approached the ACN Steering Committee with the suggestion that he might take on the chair on a full-time basis in May 1992, Clarke asked groups around the table to attempt to replace some of the CCCB resources that had supported his work for the Network.[69] Within weeks, CLC special projects director Art Kube convinced his organization to provide Clarke with a credit card to be used for ACN travel expenses. As was often the case with Kube's attempts to extract resources from the labyrinthine Congress bureaucracy, there appears to have been little paperwork or procedural clarity to this agreement. Close to one year later the credit card became the focus of contention with some Congress insiders claiming that it had been abused. By June 1993 the card was withdrawn literally immobilizing the ACN chair.[70]

At Clarke's behest, Geoff Bickerton, research director for the CUPW and a member of the Operations Committee, drafted a report following up on Clarke's memo of 30 June. A subsequent committee meeting received both Bickerton's report and an immediate response from Clarke. The committee agreed to follow up on the

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[68] Clarke, "Memorandum to Operations Committee." Participants in the meeting confirm that Clarke's threat was taken seriously. Indeed, a 'constitutional procedure' for dealing with the chair's resignation was hurriedly drafted by the Operations Committee and adopted by the next Assembly (Winnipeg, June, 1993). The episode serves to underscore the fact that procedural clarity and transparency had not kept pace with the growth in the Network's campaign activities. ACN Operations Committee, "Constitutional Procedure," June 1993 and Summary of Discussion and Major Decisions, ACN, Twenty-first Assembly, Winnipeg, 18-20 June 1993. By late September 1993, a selection procedure for new co-chairs for the Network was in place and an Administrative Transition Team was established shortly thereafter. Julie Davis, Memorandum to Member Organizations, 21 September 1993; Minutes, ACN, Steering Committee, Ottawa, 4 October 1993; and Administrative Transition Team documents in ACN files.

[69] Interviews with meeting participants.

[70] Clarke, Interview by author; Tony Clarke, Memorandum to Bob White, 25 June 1993.

human and other resources Clarke was requesting for the run-up to the federal election. Jim Turk, OFL research director and a member of the Committee, was asked to lead a taskforce to examine "structural improvements" for the Network and to report within two to three weeks. One participant in the meeting concluded: "I think Tony's 'conditions' will work for the election period."[71]

Taken together, Clarke's memos to the Operations Committee, the two reports drafted in response during the summer of 1993, and Clarke's final report to the November 1993 Assembly provide a substantial overview of the organizational state of the Network at the time.[72] In his first missive to the committee, Clarke draws a picture of an organization that is little short of dysfunctional and questions the ACN's ability to survive in its existing form. Astonishingly, only one month after one of the ACN's most successful endeavours, Clarke writes that "it is obvious that the ACN research committee has been virtually non-existent and non-functional for several years" and, that the "communications committee was largely dormant during the period of the caravan and the mobilization for 15 May."[73]

While the recommendations of the Bickerton Report are couched in diplomatic language they nonetheless implicitly confirm many of the organizational weaknesses catalogued by Clarke. Bickerton identifies the need for clerical support for the ACN secretariat, confirms the lack of "clarity as to the role and responsibility of the ACN in determining research priorities," and calls for the restructuring of the communications committee. In addition, the report highlights concerns with the relationship between the ACN and Common Frontiers, the need for more support for regional or provincial coalitions and returns, at some length, to the issue of the CLC credit card.[74]

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[71] Michael McBane, Memorandum to Mandy Rocks, 15 June 1993.

[72] See Action Canada Network, "Report of the Task Force to Review the Operational Structure of the ACN," Ottawa, 22 July 1993; Bickerton, "Report on ACN Issues"; and Clarke, "Action Canada: the Makings of a Movement."

[73] Other participants differ only in the degree to which they agree with Clarke's assessment. Various personal interviews.

[74] Bickerton, "Report on ACN Issues."

The Report of the Task Force to Review the Operational Structure of the ACN reflects the opinions of a panel of three ACN 'veterans' representing a range of sectors and regions.[75] The report unequivocally reasserts the collective model of leadership the Network had originally operated under. It argues specifically for a reinstatement of two co-chair positions, more precisely "one male, one female, one from labour and one non-labour," along with maximum terms of three years in order to "allow the broadest possible participation of member groups in leadership of the ACN."[76] The report's authors also proposed that the Network return to external representation by committee. They describe their prescription as follows:

> It is important that the public face of the ACN reinforce the fact that it is a broad coalition representing major organizations. To help achieve that goal, the assembly should designate a certain number of spokespeople who are the people delegated responsibility for speaking on behalf of the ACN. The number should be large enough (perhaps eight) to allow gender balance and sectoral and regional diversity.[77]

The report also recommended "reinvigorating" a Steering Committee that "met inconsistently and lacked clarity about its role and composition" and clarifying eligibility requirements for membership in the ACN.[78] The picture painted by the task force of a collective and broadly participatory model of leadership that had fallen on tough times was a viewpoint that was widely shared. Some participants suggested that it appeared that less effort was being expended on consensus building and that decision-making was taking place in smaller, less inclusive circles. As a result, it is not surprising that the level of participation in Network meetings was, on average, decreasing during this period. Two conflicting rationales are put forward for this downturn in participation. On the one hand, that it was a logical consequence of

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[75] Along with Toronto-based Turk who was very active with the Ontario Coalition for Social Justice, the taskforce members were: Lorraine Michaels, a staff person with the Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice and past coordinator of the Newfoundland Coalition for Equality; and Barb Byers, president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour and, by extension, a general vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress.

[76] Action Canada Network, "Report of the Task Force to Review the Operational Structure of the ACN."

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

frustration at decision-making taking place at arm's length from committee meetings. On the other hand, that it reflected a feeling among some that the Network was "in good hands" freeing them up to deal with other pressing demands within their own organizations.[79]

5. People Power

The impact of Tony Clarke's imminent departure as chair of the ACN serves to underline an important and continuing theme in the development of the Network: the critical role of individuals and personal relationships. Beyond the length of his term as chair, Clarke was recognized for the valuable skills he brought from his background in ecumenical coalition building. In the opinion of many, Clarke's contribution was an essential ingredient.[80] The phenomenon however was not limited to Clarke alone. From the outset, other individuals also played key roles in the Network's progression. While Maude Barlow and John Trent at the Council of Canadians generated momentum towards the formation of the PCN, engagement with trade liberalization *per se* was advanced by the work of Marjorie Cohen of NAC and John Dillon and others at GATT-Fly. Meanwhile Duncan Cameron at the CCPA guided the analysis of the FTA text, which played such an important role in mobilizing various sectors.

An organization-by-organization review of the Network's membership brings to light the essential part played by specific individuals in ensuring their organization's support and participation. In some cases, this role was of dramatic import for the Network as a whole. For example, as the PCN moved beyond its narrow FTA focused mandate and attempted to boost its organizational capacity, Art Kube, CLC director of special projects and representative to the PCN from late 1988

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[79] Both arguments were supported in personal interviews with participants.

[80] The degree of respect for Clarke's abilities in this regard garnered from personal interviews is overwhelming. One described the "importance of good leadership that knows how to keep people together, keep your eye on the target know where you want to go but you know when to compromise and how important the consensus process is." Another commented on the "highly sophisticated manner in which Tony Clarke tended to political relations."

onward, played an increasingly prominent role despite a continuing wariness towards the process on his organization's part. Working against the current, Kube obtained funding for the ACN's coordination of the Campaign for Fair Taxes and continued to facilitate CLC support and resources for the Network culminating in the travel credit card episode recounted above.[81]

Kube's value to the PCN lay, above all else, in his own ability and willingness to alternately manipulate and circumvent bureaucratic decision-making processes within the Congress.[82] His importance to the Network was thus derived from the fact that he *did not* faithfully represent and *was not* effectively accountable to an organizational leadership which itself either lacked direction or disagreed with the coalition building strategy. Ironically, while CLC president Shirley Carr was far from a dynamic leader and did little to support coalition building or the PCN/ACN, because of Kube's presence the relationship between the Congress and the Network was arguably more productive and less problematic than it later was under the leadership of Bob White. While the link between the CLC and the Network appeared more vital with White in office, this was not reflected in the day-to-day working relationship. Art Kube's role as an independent advocate for the Network within the Congress

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[81] While the CLC would allocate $35,000 to the PCN for its role in this campaign, the Congress spent over $500,000 on its own Campaign for Fair Taxes activities. Most of this amount went towards a print media advertising campaign over which other PCN member groups had no influence and whose merits were widely challenged both inside and outside the labour movement. CLC, "Report on Affiliates Communications Directors Meeting," Ottawa, May 1990.

The CLC's concessions to the PCN were, of course, not entirely a result of Kube's efforts. For example, resources for the Campaign for Fair Taxes and the joint leadership model were only obtained following strenuous lobbying and demands from other member groups and the ACN leadership. Kube, Interview by author; Wagg, Interview by author; Riche, Interview by author. See also PCN, "Administrative Committee Agenda," Pro-Canada Network, 17 August 1989 and Winsor, "Free Trade Conference Lets Nationalist Genie Out of Bottle."

It is important to note that free trade was the last priority of the CLC's three-pronged deregulation, privatization and free trade campaign initiated in 1986. Insiders point out that by the time free trade became the prime concern most of the funding allocated had been spent. Personal interviews with senior CLC officers and staff including Kube, Interview by author; Wagg, Interview by author; Riche, Interview by author.

[82] Kube's attitude drew on his own history as a senior elected official prior to becoming a staff person at the CLC, as well as his strong personality. See Chapter 2 on the BC solidarity experience; Kube, Interview by author.

bureaucracy appears to have been more valuable than the new president's formal commitment to the cause.[83]

In their study of NAC, Vickers et al. suggest that accountable representation is not necessarily the norm for coalitions of social movements. As the authors conclude, "the original assumption that each delegate would represent the views of the group that sent her to NAC in whatever way the group saw fit proved to be more fiction than fact."[84] The Kube example points to an equally fragile relationship between representation and accountability in the case of the PCN/ACN.

The process of rapprochement between the PCN and its Québec-based member groups that culminated in the renaming and restructuring of the Network was also facilitated by "the force of personalities."[85] CSN vice-president Monique Simard had a longstanding personal commitment to coalition building as well as an understanding of and affinity for her English Canadian colleagues. When Simard resigned her position at the CSN in 1993, a gaping hole was left in the Network's new model relationship with Québec. As Tony Clarke acknowledges, "basing something on one individual person and personality may have been naïve. When Monique left it created a vacuum that was not really filled."[86]

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[83] This opinion was shared with the author by several participants including some holding senior positions within CLC-affiliated unions. The high expectations for White's term at the CLC from the left in the labour movement and Network supporters were not fulfilled during this period.

[84] Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women,* 196.

[85] Clarke, Interview by author.

[86] In a letter to CSN Secretary Treasurer Pierre Paquette, Clarke laid out his concerns with the degenerating relationship between the Québec organizations and the ACN. Tony Clarke, Letter to Pierre Paquette, Secretary Treasurer, CSN, 16 June 1993. Clarke recalls a subsequent meeting in the fall of 1993 when the parties "had it out." Clarke, Interview by author.

In an interesting parallel, during the debate on the PCN's relationship with Québec, the Canadian Teachers' Federation representative on the Network's Steering Committee, Harvey Weiner, was an ardent proponent of maintaining the *status quo.* As a teachers' union leader in Québec in the 1970s and early 1980s, Weiner had been an active participant in debates around sovereignty on the federalist side. His stand at the PCN table ten years later clearly demonstrated his own continuing commitment to this position, but while it was likely somewhat reflective of the essence of his organizations' stance, the emphasis and passion he accorded it was unlikely to represent the importance or priority the CTF attached to this issue. See reports of various PCN/ACN meetings and Harvey Weiner, Interview by author, Ottawa, 6 May 1992.

Like Kube, Simard, and Clarke, many representatives at the PCN table had been longer-term participants in popular sector coalition building. Research for this study has identified an impressive web of personal relationships that evolved through the 1980s, in many cases with roots in the 1970s, in some cases even earlier. There is no doubt that like the key role played by specific individuals these relationships were an important facilitating factor in the development of the Pro-Canada/Action Canada Network.[87]

6. The Implications of Federations

In the case of the PCN/ACN, representation and accountability were further complicated by the dynamics and demands of Canadian federalism. Geography alone posed important logistical limitations, for example, severely restricting face-to-face broadly based decision-making when resources were limited.[88] Effective pan-Canadian campaigning was hampered by the nature of political jurisdictions, specifically the binational federal system.[89] The intricacy of provincial jurisdictions of varying size, economic strength, and other regional differences was further amplified by the unresolved co-existence of two nations and the First Nations within one federal state. These variables were reflected in the difficulties faced by individual popular sector movements and organizations and highlighted in the context of what was in effect *an umbrella network of umbrella networks*. Regarding the women's movement, Phillips argues:

> National organizations operate primarily as political pressure groups focusing their attention on policy and advocacy of the federal, and occasionally provincial, governments. However, their connections with grassroots issues and social needs are narrow, because they are filtered through member

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[87] See Chapters 1 and 3 on the development of the popular sector prior to the Canada Summit.

[88] This limitation was particularly keenly felt by the provincial coalitions. As a representative for the Manitoba Coalition against Free Trade put it: "I think coalitions were really underestimated within the PCN. We were all pissed off that we only got 10 minutes on the agenda. We were the backbone, but many times provincial coalitions felt like an appendage. Part of the problem was that we were always meeting in Ottawa." Spratt, Interview by author.

[89] As Miriam Smith notes: "a broad range of empirical studies have suggested that federalism has significant effects for the organization of collective action." Miriam Smith, "Interest Groups and Social Movements," in *Canadian Politics in the Twenty First Century*, ed. Michael S. Whittington and Glen Williams (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1999), 181.

> organizations rather than being built on direct, multifarious ties with community groups. In order to avoid severe detachment of national and grassroots activity, it is essential that linkages between the national headquarters and local member groups *within* federations be highly integrated.[90]

This lack of integration with, it should be added, the inevitable danger it posed to representation and accountability, led, not without irony, to the conclusion by one national organization leader that the "strength of coalitions is that they're often closer to what's happening in organizations than the leadership of the organization themselves!"[91] Indeed, the inclusion of provincial coalitions in the PCN planted the seed for a broadening of its mandate and by the same token posed a challenge to national organizations. Several provincial coalitions had mandates that went far beyond free trade; in any case, they were all forums for the coming together of activists who shared interests and commitments much broader than opposition to the FTA.[92] The coalitions also provided an internal accountability check of sorts for national groups. Information could now flow to grassroots activists both through national sectoral groups and through provincial cross-sectoral coalitions. This structure also gave activists an alternative to their own intra-organizational process for exerting pressure on their national leadership, often to the latter's dismay.[93]

This dynamic was replicated in the relationship amongst federated national organizations that sat side by side with their member groups – for example, the CLC, NAC, and the Canadian Environmental Network – though it was clearly most significant for the labour movement. In fact, one of the earliest points of conflict in the history of the Network was the CLC's opposition to the presence of its own affiliated unions at the table. This recurring objection on the CLC's part was

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[90] Phillips, "How Ottawa Blends: Shifting Government Relationships with Interest Groups," 776. As one provincial coalition representative argued: "a number of national groups that joined the PCN didn't bring their provincial counterparts into the provincial coalitions. That should have been one of the responsibilities of membership." Spratt, Interview by author.

[91] Cohen, Interview by author.

[92] Bleyer, "Coalition Building and the Canadian Popular Sector."

[93] This theme arose in personal interviews with trade unionists from CLC-affiliates as well as provincial coalition activists.

repeatedly rebuffed by its affiliates with the support of other member groups. From the PCN/ACN perspective, the affiliates participation, much like the earlier inclusion of provincial coalitions, was a precondition for its survival and success. The affiliates were essential to ensuring that the labour movement actually delivered 'on the ground' in terms of mobilization and resources. Moreover, without them at the table the CLC was likely to revert to its more traditional conservatism both on trade liberalization and on movement and coalition building. For CLC-affiliated unions like the CAW, CUPW and CUPE, the Network provided a forum to influence and sometimes even override the Congress leadership. As one affiliate official politely put it, "the Network was helpful in overcoming inertia and/or trepidation around certain issues at the Congress."[94] The perspective of affiliated unions on the value of the Network helps to explain the CLC's caution and concern *vis-à-vis* the PCN/ACN, despite its own influential role in Network decision-making throughout the period covered by this research.

Beyond the challenge to federal bodies like the CLC, the complexity of intra-organizational structures combined with the important role played by a few individuals together hint at other potential problems in the PCN/ACN's coalition dynamic. Building on an initial contribution by Piven and Cloward, MacAdam describes the phenomenon of oligarchization in the context of social movements as follows:

> The establishment of formal movement organizations may create a certain class of individuals who come to value the maintenance of that organization over the realization of movement goals. In such cases, the insurgent potential of the movement is sacrificed to insure the survival of its organizational offshoot.[95]

The narrow base of individuals representing many organizations at the PCN table created fertile ground for Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy as well as a tendency towards an 'elite accommodation' model of coalition politics.

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[94] Katz, Interview by author.

[95] MacAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*, 55; originally argued by Francis Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Poor People's Movements* (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

Participation in coalitions can also serve as an alternative to intra-sectoral organizational development and mobilization. As MacAdam argues, again following Piven and Cloward, "[t]he final danger inherent in the creation of formal movement organizations is the dissolution of indigenous support ... As insurgents increasingly seek to cultivate ties to outside groups, their indigenous links are likely to grow weaker."[96] One PCN participant expressed the concern that "coalitions sometimes serve as excuses for inaction," while another pointed less diplomatically to the Network degenerating into a "talking shop for labour lefties who can't move their own unions."[97]

Finally, cooptation – another likely consequence of the formalization of organization according to Piven and Cloward – would appear, on the basis of the PCN/ACN case, to be less likely in the case of coalition formation by movements and their organizations. At a minimum, the tendency to cooptation is probably mitigated by the distance of the coalition process from the service delivery function of any specific sectoral organization. In the case of the multi-issue, cross-movement PCN/ACN, it is difficult to imagine what the state could deliver to satisfy the Network's radicalized post-FTA objectives. The combination of long-term organizational and personal relationships in the developing popular sector with the flow of information promoted by the Network's relatively non-hierarchical structure could be considered a built-in self-defence mechanism against cooptation.[98] Nevertheless, the possibility that the PCN/ACN's own agenda would be moderated through engagement with opposition political parties and their parliamentarist priorities should not be overlooked. In fact, one important example points in an opposite direction. In the case of the debate on the constitution in 1990-92, the ACN

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[96] MacAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*, 55.

[97] Personal interviews with participants.

[98] The Network's Assembly was highly valued by participants. In particular it was viewed as an opportunity to obtain and share a wide range of information. Even as participation in the PCN/ACN's committees declined, beginning in 1989 but more dramatically in 1992-1993, attendance at Assemblies remained relatively high. Provincial coalition representatives in particular valued the access to information. By levelling organizational and geographic distances, the Assembly provided a useful counterpoint to the stresses associated with an expansive, federally structured society.

appears to have helped to ensure ongoing debate and dissent not only in the popular sector as a whole but within the labour movement as well. While the NDP and Ontario's Rae government in particular were successful in bringing the CLC into the Yes camp for the Charlottetown Referendum, the ACN table remained a space for dissident voices throughout the campaign.[99]

To sum up, in the case of the Pro-Canada Network the impact of oligarchization, the potential placebo effect of coalition work – replacing the sometimes-bitter pill of internal mobilization – and the threat of cooptation were mitigated by a structure that placed representatives from various levels within similar organizations at the same table with theoretically equal status. Thus, the structural complexity that national organizations sometimes viewed as a threat was helpful in limiting the potential gap between the Network's decision-making Assembly and its grassroots base.

7. Facing Parliament

In a system dominated by brokerage politics and first-past-the-post polling it has been argued that the "growth of citizen's groups challenges the legitimacy of the party system" as these movements seek to "enlarge the parameters of what is considered political."[100] In the Canadian context there is plenty of evidence to support claims of a decline in the legitimacy of the party system. Clarke and Kornberg identify the "decidedly unflattering images Canadians have of their political parties."[101] Two major government inquiries reporting in 1991 arrived at equally damning conclusions. The Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing noted that:

> Canadians appear to distrust their political leaders, the political process and political institutions. Whatever the cause, there is little doubt that Canadian

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[99] See Chapter 6 above.

[100] Galipeau, "Political Parties, Interest Groups, and New Social Movements: Toward New Representation," 411.

[101] Harold D. Clarke and Allan Kornberg, "Evaluations and Evolution: Public Attitudes toward Canada's Federal Political Parties, 1965-1991," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* XXVI, no. 2 (1993), 290.

> political parties are held in low public esteem, and that their standing has declined steadily over the past decade. They are under attack from citizens for failing to achieve a variety of goals deemed important by significant groups within society.[102]

While, in a similar vein, the Citizens Forum on Canada's Future (1991) reported:

> One of the strongest messages the Forum received from participants was that they have lost their faith in both the political process and their political leaders.[103]

Adding further that,

> the actions of the government, once in power, seem to bear little resemblance to the party platform in an election campaign. Major government policies are developed and enacted during a mandate which either were never mentioned or received little attention during a campaign.[104]

Nevertheless, challenging a still firmly entrenched parliamentary system is a daunting task for single-issue movements and organizations. As Hirst points out, "any political 'alternative' that does not compete for the vote as the parties do and yet seeks to change the political agenda is in danger of political exclusion."[105] The presence of the ACN consolidated space at the federal level for social movement organizations to move beyond lobbying and participation in bipartite and tripartite forums to collective political action. Similarly, the Network fostered the development of a common public profile for these groups. While the process began long before the Pro-Canada Network was formed, the consistent presence of a cross-sectoral, pan-Canadian coalition significantly advanced it. In this respect, the PCN/ACN can be said to have made a tangible contribution to a reconstruction of political identities by broadening the scope of legitimate political activity and discourse.

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[102] *Reforming Electoral Democracy: Report of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing* quoted in Jeanine Brodie and Jane Jenson, "Piercing the Smokescreen: Stability and Change in Brokerage Politics," in *Canadian Politics in Transition*, ed. Brian A. Tanguay and Alain G. Gagnon, (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1996), 67.

[103] Canada, Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future (Spicer Commission), *Report to the People and Government of Canada* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1991), 96.

[104] Ibid., 101.

[105] Paul Hirst, *Representative Democracy and its Limits* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 4.

As the PCN developed an independent public profile and some organizational capacity, it also equipped popular sector groups with a common voice *vis-à-vis* the partisan political realm. In a parliamentary system that insists on dragging parties away from movements, this was a significant development. Building on the legitimacy first gained through analysis of the FTA, and enhanced by the ability to deliver a campaign against the FTA and then on other issues, the Network developed strong working relationships with the two federal opposition parties from 1987 to 1993. These relationships, in turn, helped to legitimate the Network as a bona fide political actor.

From the beginning, the Network demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the value of parliamentary allies in its quest to stop the FTA. The minutes of the PCN's First Assembly record agreement with the following assertion:

> The Parliamentary process can assist us, if there is such public outcry that the opposition will create an impasse by obstructing the business of the House. We need to be aware of the complimentary role played by an extra parliamentary movement such as our own. Parliament needs public opinion, needs public actions, if it is going to take the actions we want.[106]

While the PCN identified, for example, the tactical importance of supporting the initiative by Liberal Senators to obstruct the FTA implementing legislation, its broader strategic orientation continued to emphasize public education and mobilization.

The concept of a political opportunity structure proves useful as a framework for examining the relationship between the Network and the parliamentary-electoral realm.[107] The variables Tarrow identifies as defining political opportunity – including divisions between political elites, instability of political alignments, existence of allies and support groups, degree of openness or closure of the polity – seem particularly apposite to the circumstances of the Canadian free trade debate of 1987-1988.[108] In

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[106] PCN First Assembly Minutes.

[107] See Chapter 2 above.

[108] Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* .

fact, in addition to Tarrow's more narrowly political variables, it is tempting to suggest that the political opportunity structure facing the Pro-Canada Network in 1987 was characterized by a more fundamental systemic crisis. The postwar order built around the Keynesian Welfare State (KWS) was already well into its disintegration and a new hegemonic project had yet to be consolidated.[109]

The strong anti-FTA stand taken by the Liberal Party led by John Turner was a symptom of divisions between elites, the instability of political alignments and the conjunctural crisis facing Canadian capital and the state. Vituperative denunciations of Turner by his peers in the Canadian corporate elite marked a deep, though as it turned out brief, feud within the political establishment and economic elite of which Turner and the Liberal Party, as 'Canada's natural governing party,' were charter members. While there was substantial opposition to Turner's position on the deal within the Liberal Party itself – including former Trudeau cabinet ministers Donald Johnston and Donald Macdonald – this was muted by the pragmatic calculation that electoral success depended on drawing some of the centre-left electorate away from the NDP.[110]

The divisions within the Liberal Party and competitive jockeying between the two opposition parties on the trade issue reflected what has variously been referred to as an "alignment shift" or a "dealignment" in Canadian politics.[111] Tilly argues that electoral instability and competition is more likely to create political allies for social movements.[112] In the European context, Kriesi points to the competitive dynamics

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[109] On this theme, see Breton and Jenson, "After Free Trade and Meech Lake: Quoi de neuf?" and Chapter 2 above.

[110] Clarkson points out that 'left-nationalist' Liberal caucus members were more and more in control of the Party's policy agenda by late summer 1987. Stephen Clarkson, "The Liberals: Disoriented in Defeat," in *The Canadian General Election of 1988*, ed. Alan Frizzell (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989), 32. This followed Turner's decentralization of control of the caucus, the appointment 'left-nationalist' Lloyd Axworthy as trade critic and the resignation of leading free trade advocate and former Trudeau Treasury Board president Donald Johnston. Doern and Tomlin, *Faith and Fear: The Free Trade Story*, 230-32.

[111] Johnston, *Letting the People Decide: Dynamics of a Canadian Election* ; on dealignment, see Clarke et al., *Absent Mandate: Interpreting Change in Canadian Elections;* and on electoral instability in general, see Forbes, "Absent Mandate '88? Parties and Voters in Canada," 7.

[112] Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, 213-14.

between parties of the left as a variable affecting social movement mobilization.[113] Finally, Jenkins argues that the American Democratic Party was pressed into relationships with social movements by electoral calculations.[114]

By 1993, the usually relatively tranquil Canadian parliamentary landscape had been transformed and was on the eve of further and more dramatic change. Over the course of the twentieth century, change had for the most part been limited to the rise and fall of a series of minor parties. Now, the Progressive Conservative Party – one of the two major brokerage parties – faced virtual electoral annihilation as its coalition of regional dissent dissolved into two new regionally based political forces. Meanwhile, the Liberal Party prepared itself for a return to its rightful place as a 'reliable' governing party under the leadership of Jean Chrétien. The Liberals abandoned their staunch opposition to the FTA and, as a matter of course, the more progressive elements of the party's social and economic program. At the same time, the Liberal Party's discourse retained its traditional centre-left tilt designed to ensure electoral success.[115]

The results of the 1993 federal election campaign further altered the ACN's political opportunity structure. With the Liberals now in power, the task of opposition was left to two new parties, the sovereignist Bloc Québecois and the Western Canada based right-wing populist Reform Party, neither one a likely ally for pan-Canadian progressive social movements. At the same time, the consignment of the NDP to the parliamentary minor leagues served to delegitimize progressive policies and discourse creating an atmosphere that was far less propitious for the Network's activities. The

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[113] Chapter 3 in Hanspeter Kriesi, Ruud Koopmans, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and Marco G. Giugni, *New Social Movements in Western Europe: a Comparative Analysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). In the European context this competition was most often played out between Socialist and Communist parties, at least until the emergence of Green and alternative left-wing parties. In Canada, the dynamic only took hold in the interregnum following the breakdown of the postwar KWS consensus and the momentary 'dealignment' that saw the Liberal Party shake loose of the nascent neo-liberal continentalist project.

[114] J. Craig Jenkins, *The Politics of Insurgency: The Farm Worker Movement in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia Press, 1985).

[115] See Chapter 6 above.

Liberal Party's ability to shift substantially rightward was itself partly facilitated by the ongoing crisis facing the New Democratic Party. While the party's poorer than expected showing in 1988 led to introspection and critique, five years later the NDP still reaped its worst electoral showing ever.[116]

The limitations of a political opportunity structure approach become apparent when it comes to evaluating the relationship between the Pro-Canada/Action Network and the NDP. While the Network's attitude towards the NDP was definitely coloured by shorter-term tactical considerations, it was much more profoundly determined by the commonalities in the projects the two groups were advancing. This dynamic is beyond the scope of an analytical framework rooted in a rational choice paradigm that fails to fully consider the interests and ideologies of movements.

As Boggs documents in the case of its European representatives, modern social democracy has entertained a love/hate relationship with social movements.[117] Wainwright elaborates the argument while broadening its scope:

> Both kinds of parties (social democratic and communist), for instance, have traditionally tended either to take social movements under their wing: "our women's/peace/tenants' movement", "this Great Movement of Ours", or, if the movement is too stroppy to be embraced, to give them leper status and treat them as "outside our movement", and presumably doomed.[118]

Mirroring Boggs' conclusion that the relationship becomes more difficult as social democratic parties win electoral office, the NDP's rapport with progressive social movements became strained in the run-up to the 1988 federal election, undoubtedly the party's closest ever brush with federal power.[119] The relationship later plunged to

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[116] The Report of the CLC's Special Task Force on Labour-Party Relations set up to in 1989 reaffirmed labour's commitment to " the concept that labour and the NDP are partners in the pursuit of social justice" while at the same time calling for a number of changes in the relationship. Elaine Bernard, "Labour, the New Democratic Party, and the 1988 Federal Election," in *The Challenge of Restructuring: North American Labor Movements Respond*, ed. Jane Jenson and Rianne Mahon, *Labor and Social Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 139.

[117] Boggs, *Social Movements and Political Power.*

[118] Wainwright, *Arguments for a New Left: Answering the Free-Market Right*, 213. Galipeau makes a far less dramatic Canadian comment on this theme: "The NDP often claims a special role for itself as vanguard parliamentary party representing new issues and new social demands." Galipeau, "Political Parties, Interest Groups, and New Social Movements: Toward New Representation," 421, footnote 8.

[119] Bernard notes a "lively anticipation of power" among NDP strategists at the time. Bernard, "Labour,

the depths of acrimony with the imposition of the 'social contract' on public sector workers and the abandonment of a number of prominent campaign promises by the Rae NDP government in Ontario (1990-95).[120] Conflict was particularly fierce within the labour movement whose members bore the brunt of these policies. For those on the pro-NDP side of the rift in the labour movement, "coalitions" writ large and the ACN became handy scapegoats for their party's woes.[121]

The openness of the Turner-led Liberals to challenging the bilateral free trade project was essential to the Pro-Canada Network's early credibility and legitimacy. Ironically, the PCN's early relationship with the Liberal Party established the basis for the Network to become an interlocutor with the New Democratic Party, the political

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the New Democratic Party, and the 1988 Federal Election," 142. On the relationship between social democracy in power and social movements in the European context, see Hanspeter Kriesi, "New Social Movements and the New Class in the Netherlands," *American Journal of Sociology* 94, no. 1 (1989): 296-97.

[120] Walkom, *Rae Days: The Rise and Fall of the NDP.*

[121] Peter Bleyer, "Coalitions of Social Movements as Agencies for Social Change: the Action Canada Network," in *Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice*, ed. William K. Carroll (Toronto: Garamond, 1997), 147. Long-time NDP member of Parliament for the riding of Winnipeg-Transcona, Bill Blaikie, drafted the classic statement of this negative perspective on the ACN and coalition building writ large. In a widely circulated mimeograph, Blaikie argued that the PCN/ACN had undermined support for the NDP: "Imagine if all the work that went into the anti-free trade movement over the last decade by various groups and individuals had gone into the federal NDP as the only political party committed to abrogation of the FTA and non-implementation of NAFTA. Instead, by 1993, the NDP had been variously attacked, ignore, or insulted, not to mention frustrated, by the never ending dithering of such groups in deciding whose position on the issues was superior and who deserved their support." Bill Blaikie, M.P., "Political Movements for the Right; Social Movements for the Left," February 1996.

party that carried overwhelmingly more sympathy among social movement groups. Similarly, while an analysis of the political opportunity structure facing FTA opponents in 1987-88 clearly draws out the importance of the Liberal Party's stance in the emergence and formative stages of the Pro-Canada Network, it provides a less convincing framework for understanding the subsequent expansion of the Network's mandate and discourse. From the NDP's perspective, the Pro-Canada Network was at first viewed with scepticism because of its apparent relationship with the Liberal Party. Later, the PCN was viewed as a threat when its mandate and discourse moved beyond a social democratic framework turning it into an apparent competitor for the mantle of political agency of the Canadian Left.

Conclusion

1. Theory Meets Practice

During the period from its formation in April 1987 to the federal election campaign in the fall of 1993, the Pro-Canada/Action Canada Network developed beyond the expectations of most participants. The Network also defied most of the prognoses established from within the analytical frameworks reviewed in this paper, as it moved relatively seamlessly beyond the initial single-issue rationale for its formation. The PCN's discourse quickly evolved from a relatively narrow critique of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement to opposition to a broader political agenda. At first, this agenda was defined by association with the party that was promoting and implementing it – the Tory agenda – but later characterized in more structural terms as the corporate agenda.

From the perspective of Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) there is little incentive for the formation and consolidation of social movement coalitions. The RMT approach does however provide a helpful emphasis on continuities in social movements both through its focus on organizational forms and activities, and its use of a historical method to provide a firm basis for comparison over time.[1] This accent on continuity rather than difference is certainly appropriate in the case of the evolution of the Canadian popular sector that culminated in the formation of the Pro-Canada Network. Nonetheless, RMT's rational choice roots show through in the calculus that leads to the conclusion that coalitions are unlikely to be enduring and that competition is at the very least equally likely.[2]

In contrast, New Movement Theory (NMT) identifies a rupture between older and newer movements in terms of issues and values, as well as tactics and organizational forms. While this particular emphasis of NMT is vigorously contradicted by this case study, the accompanying stress on the formation of social identities is certainly an asset when considering coalition formation among social

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[1] Zald and McCarthy, and Tilly and Tarrow respectively.

[2] Klandermans and Staggenborg.

movements and their organizations. Unfortunately, this framework's stress on discontinuity between old and new movements includes the implication that 'identity politics' are solely the domain of the latter. As Jenson points out, all politics have always been about identities.[3]

The inclination to celebrate and, at times, reify difference tends to exclude movement convergence as a form of political agency from consideration within NMT. A prominent exception is the 'radical pluralism' advocated by Laclau and Mouffe who "construct the political as the site of identity formation, contestation and renegotiation."[4] Yet, here again, concepts that appear helpful to a theorizing of convergence are undermined by an emphasis on "discursive articulation" at the expense of "concrete political-economic structures."[5]

From a class-analytical perspective, the prospects for a continuing Pro-Canada/Action Canada Network are of less interest than the nature of any enduring alliance, its basis for unity, and objectives. Specifically, would the coalition develop the potential to transform social relations or, more likely from this point of view, become stalled in a social reform dynamic. A framework that privileges class above other societal cleavages and challenges the transformative potential of non-class based movements can logically be expected to question the transformative potential of a cross-movement coalition. Nevertheless, all forms of class analysis are not necessarily mired in the economic determinism and political substitutism that have characterized most of its dominant political manifestations. A broader vision and politics includes Marx's own identification of the fulsome emancipation of humanity as the objective with the liberatory potential of the working class assigned as the means to this end. In a contemporary rearticulation, Rustin speculates that a "chain of equivalence" *à la*

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[3] Jenson, "Representations in Crisis: The Roots of Canada's Permeable Fordism."

[4] Anna Marie Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe: the Radical Democratic Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 1998), 125.

[5] Carroll, "Social Movements and Counterhegemony: Canadian Contexts and Social Theories," 30.

Laclau and Mouffe might be located in "resistance to capital" rather than in class *per se*.[6]

Critics working from within different analytical frameworks made specific prognostications regarding the Pro-Canada Network. From the viewpoint of pluralist political science, Doern argued that the end of the battle to block the FTA would lead the groups making up the PCN to return to their traditional relationship to Canadian politics. From a class-analytical perspective, Albo and Swartz anticipated a similar dénouement given the PCN's lack of a "coherent general view."[7] A more optimistic if nuanced forecast was put forward from a neo-gramscian point of view. For Carroll and Mahon, the breadth and scope of engagement by various social actors in the Network – including but not limited to the labour movement – allowed for some hopefulness regarding the potential for the constitution of an organic alliance (Mahon) or a counterhegemonic project (Carroll).[8]

2. Explaining the Pro-Canada Network

Over the course of this study, different analytical frameworks have been employed in an attempt to best understand the PCN/ACN experience. Considered by some a variant of RMT and by others a distinct framework for the study of social movements, the political process model can identify some of the key factors that facilitated the formation of the Pro-Canada Network.[9] Yet the prism of the political opportunity structure fails to reflect the underlying conjuncture of systemic crisis. Electoral dealignment did create willing political allies for the SMOs uniting to oppose Canada-U.S. free trade; while growing anti-party sentiment, the erosion of faith in the political process and developing interorganizational and personal

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[6] Rustin, "Absolute Voluntarism: Critique of a Post-Marxist Concept of Hegemony," 171.

[7] Albo and Swartz, "The Free Trade Papers," 156.

[8] Doern and Tomlin, *Faith and Fear: The Free Trade Story*; Mahon, "Post-Fordism: Some Issues for Labour."

[9] Ayres employs a political process model to assess the PCN/ACN. See Ayres, *Defying Conventional Wisdom: Political Movements and Popular Contention against North American Free Trade*.

relationships combined to produce some receptiveness to social movement alliances as a form of political agency. But partisan instability and the convergence of sectoral concerns among social movements also reflected of deeper structural developments.

The permeable fordism that characterized the Canadian postwar development model limited the effectiveness of Keynesian demand management. Already half-hearted, attempts at nation-building through industrial policy were compromised by continentalism while economic crisis south of the forty-ninth parallel spread rapidly northward. Responding to a deepening crisis, including increasing industrial militancy and social demands, Canadian capital changed its strategic orientation in the mid-1970s. Through new and revitalized collective organizations, Canadian corporations mounted a counter-mobilization aimed at re-stabilizing and enhancing profitability. Capital pressed for a shift in economic development models: an abandonment of expansionary fiscal policy and a centralist state in favour of a decentralized market-driven approach to industrial and economic policy. As a result, mild interventionism would give way to deregulation and privatization.

With continuing public support for welfare state programs obstructing the implementation of a full neo-liberal policy turn during its first term (1984-88), the Mulroney government turned to the bold continentalism that also characterized capital's new strategic direction. The Canada-U.S. FTA would provide a "conditioning framework" for the Canadian economy and society.[10] In this sense, the agreement was not merely, nor in fact primarily, about trade *per se*, although the discourse around it was carefully formulated to emphasize the supposed benefits of reduced tariffs for workers and consumers. Carroll describes the FTA as an "attempt to win the people to the historical bloc" with an appeal based on jobs and low prices.[11]

At the same time, the centrality of the FTA in capital's plan for a post-Keynesian era created a powerful focal point for contestation. First as an issue, then as

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[10] Grinspun and Cameron, "The Politics of North American Integration: Diverse Perspectives, Converging Criticisms."

[11] Carroll, "Restructuring Capital, Reorganizing Consent: Gramsci, Political Economy and Canada."

the working text of an agreement, and finally as an implemented bilateral treaty, the FTA condensed and distilled a wide range of issues and themes, crystallizing the social, economic, environmental, and cultural concerns of many sectors in society. The centrepiece in the plan to stabilize capital's prospects through a neo-liberal continentalist model of development became a potent symbolic, as well as material target for its critics. As participation in the April 1987 Canada Summit indicates, and the early membership list for the PCN confirms, concern with the implications of bilateral free trade cut across many different constituencies. In many cases, the FTA would serve as an entry point into a broader political engagement for movements and their organizations.

Focusing on three movements that played important roles in the development of the PCN – labour, women and ecumenical justice – this study has identified some key factors that worked in tandem with the trade issue and the FTA in facilitating the coalescing of movements and their interests, and in subsequent broadening of the resulting discourse beyond a single-issue focus.

First, all three of these sectors were ideologically predisposed to taking their engagement with the FTA beyond narrow constituency self-interest. Important elements within these movement sectors brought with them pre-existing commitments to shared objectives for social change. In line with the broad discourse of Canadian second wave feminism, and the important influence of a socialist feminist politic within it, NAC elaborated a gendered cross-sectoral critique of the FTA while pressing for alliances beyond its own constituency to bring about social transformation. Similarly, the ecumenical justice movement was deeply influenced by liberation theology and arguments for economic self-sufficiency and completely invested in a coalition building strategy to bring about social change. As we have shown, from the outset GATT-Fly and other groups in this sector defined their engagement with the trade issue in the broadest of terms. Finally, the relative strength of social unionism, as opposed to a narrower economistic conception of unionism,

within the Canadian labour movement meant that the initial emphasis on the implications of free trade for its member's jobs was quickly widened.

Second, the focus on free trade and the founding of the PCN took place at a moment when the personal and organizational relationships developed within the popular sector had achieved a certain critical mass. While it was preceeded by other initiatives such as the 1981 Coalition on Interest Rates, the release of *Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis* stands out as marking the onset of this phase of social movement politics. *Ethical Reflections* was particularly influential in drawing the labour movement into a broader framework for alliance building. In conjunction with the negative incentive provided by the Macdonald Commission and its report released in the fall of 1985, *Ethical Reflections* laid the groundwork for a series of popular sector events culminating with the Dialogue '86 conference and the formation of the Working Committee for Social Solidarity. A renewed nationalist movement led by the Council of Canadians and, most importantly, this group's turn to alliance building in 1987 provided the last critical ingredient.

To sum up, the confluence of social movements and the formation of a cross-sectoral or cross-movement coalition was the result of a propitious basis for unity – the Canada-U.S. FTA – emerging at a fertile moment in the development of a collaborative environment among social movements and SMOs. This environment was, in turn, greatly influenced by the ideological commitment of important elements within this evolving popular sector to an alternative, or at the very least a complement, to social democratic electoralism as political agency. Like the emergence of the FTA as the centrepiece of a continentalist neo-liberal strategy, the popular sector was the cumulative result of a set of political responses to the transition from an economic model in crisis.

The nature of free trade as an issue also facilitated the Network's transition beyond a single-issue mandate. Beyond crystallizing the concerns of a number of constituencies, reflecting its role as a "conditioning framework" the FTA condensed a

broader economic agenda.[12] As a result, free trade was positioned at the centre of the political economy master frame or "general conception of injustice," described by Carroll and Ratner.[13] The PCN's evolving discourse was then reinforced by the practice of cross-movement collaboration up to and including the 1988 federal election campaign.[14] Author Rick Salutin reflected the feelings of many other anti-FTA activists in his account of the campaign:

> Could this be the first step toward a new kind of politics in Canada, based on issues and popular mobilization around them? For a while we'd had an election that was not a substitute for a deeper, more participatory kind of democracy, but a foretaste of it.[15]

As another commentator quipped, "I went to an election and politics broke out." Even a senior labour leader and committed NDP supporter ventured the opinion that the Network had been "building a new political culture."

This positive experience of movement-based political action was further buttressed by the contrasting experience of activists engaged with the NDP during a campaign where the party failed to seize the opportunity presented by the FTA. The NDP's failure dealt a serious blow to the labour movement's loyalty to social democratic electoralism as its preferred form of political engagement. While the pull of labour's ties to the NDP was somewhat mitigated by the upsurge in social movement activism during the 1970s – including a radicalization of the labour movement itself – and by cross-movement relationships in the popular sector during the 1980s, the impact of the 1988 campaign should not be underestimated.

As we have seen, the ground for the broadening of the PCN's mandate in 1989 was well tilled far earlier. This fact is perhaps all the more important when

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[12] Ricardo Grinspun and Maxwell A. Cameron, "The Politics of North American Integration: Diverse Perspectives, Converging Criticisms."

[13] Carroll and Ratner, "Master Framing and Cross-Movement Networking in Contemporary Social Movements"; Carroll and Ratner, "Master Frames and Counterhegemony: Political Sensibilities in Contemporary Social Movements."

[14] In this sense the PCN/ACN supports the claim that "master framing and cross movement networking probably condition each other. Carroll and Ratner, "Master Framing and Cross-Movement Networking in Contemporary Social Movements," 616.

[15] Salutin, *Waiting for Democracy: A Citizen's Journal*, 263.

considering the Network's re-mandating as it was for its formation. Alone, cooperation on the campaign trail, the aggressive counter-mobilization by capital and the cold shower of neo-liberal policy implementation would not likely have led to the same result without the prior development of the popular sector, and more specifically the attention to both trade and political agency identified in this paper. In the case of groups like the CAW and GATT-Fly, internal documents and publications indicate that the single-issue PCN was considered as a possible stepping stone to a coalition with a much broader agenda very early on. GATT-Fly's perspective was significant since the group had broad influence through the *Pro-Canada Dossier*. Later, worldviews that included North/South solidarity and critiques of the capitalist model of trade and economic development would influence the ACN's engagement with trilateral free trade (NAFTA). Here, conjunctural factors, like the tension between Québec-based organizations and groups in the rest of Canada, were equally important.

The political economy master frame now articulated around free trade also gained purchase for three reasons. First, the geographic extension represented by the inclusion of Mexico in trade talks; second, the widened ambit of NAFTA which went beyond the FTA to include tough measures to liberalize investment; and third, the explicit linking of new issues beyond the scope of the FTA and NAFTA to the two pacts (e.g. GST, cuts to social programs, constitutional reform). Moreover, as a cross-movement network with some institutional materiality, the PCN/ACN created space for discursive and organizational struggle and learning. In this sense, the development of a structured agency, however incipient, contributed to an evolving common discourse. The organizational consequences of cross-movement interaction were equally significant. The PCN/ACN was a laboratory where different organizational practices and styles were shared and to some extent reconciled, pointing to the potential for a common practice across movements.

3. Understanding the Limits

Just as a positive political opportunity structure facilitated the PCN's formation and development, changes to it would take their toll on the coalition. The

Liberal Party's shift away from an anti-continentalist platform after 1989 set the stage for its allegiance to the neo-liberal free trade model after its election in 1993. The competitive dynamic that had developed between the NDP and the Liberal Party on trade issues, and which had created valuable opportunities for the PCN/ACN, was put to rest as Jean Chrétien came to power. While the 'alignment shift' in the party system continued through 1993, the consequences were now very different: the new parties entering parliament were unlikely to become allies of the anti-free trade movement.

The Network's development was also hindered by other factors. Not least of these was the ongoing tension between electoral and movement-based conceptions of agency. During the 1988 election campaign, this tension was effectively mitigated by the NDP's failure to satisfy its labour movement support base and its thirst for a focus on the FTA. As a result, trade unions gravitated to the PCN and the form of agency it represented both during and after the campaign. Still, attempts to promote some form of tactical voting towards the end of the campaign highlighted the continuing conflict as they would again in 1993.

Although the combination of defensiveness and domineering that characterized the Canadian Labour Congress leadership's attitude to coalitions softened over time, it remained an important factor in the internal dynamics of the Network. Even as it abandoned the "language of domination and manipulation," the CLC remained cautious in relinquishing control and sharing resources.[16] This was perhaps most clearly reflected in the launching of the Campaign for Fair Taxes in 1990 and when a dispute around the CLC credit card allotted to long-time ACN chair Tony Clarke contributed to his eventual resignation in 1993.

Thanks, at least in part, to the active approach to consensus management – termed "the tending of political relations" by one participant – practiced by Clarke and a succession of staff members, consensus was rarely left to chance. Consequently, the ACN avoided the complexity and inefficiency of much consensus-based decision-

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[16] Turk, Interview by author.

making.[17] Whether despite or because of this approach to decision-making, the Network's organizational structure remained stunted and failed to keep up with its growing mandate. Support for further development of the coalitional structure and capacity from some participants (e.g. provincial coalitions) was offset by strong counter-pressure from other SMOs concerned with the implications of such a consolidation (e.g. Canadian Labour Congress). For federations like the CLC, the democratization of the Network was viewed as a particular threat given their tenuous internal structural dynamics.

Whatever its causes, the stalling of the Network's democratic development was at the very least a major contributing factor and perhaps even a fatal flaw leading to its eventual decline. Kriesi suggests that structural development is a requisite for SMO success over time adding that while "internal structural deficits" restrict political success, the inverse "contributes to the stabilization of an SMO in periods of organizational decline."[18] Expanding on this micro-level perspective it is reasonable to suggest that the failure to continue to develop democratic structures, and thus ensure the twin functions of accountability and representation, feeds a crisis of legitimacy within a social movement coalition. Nevertheless, in the case of the PCN/ACN the evidence is somewhat contradictory. While we might assume that the lack of structural clarity or transparency was a constraint on the mobilization of resources, we have also shown that in at least one important case (i.e., the CLC's particular relationship with the Network) circumventing procedures and structures *within a member SMO* resulted in the maximization of resources for the Network.

In any case, two conclusions can be drawn with some confidence here. First, deficient organizational capacity left the Network overextended. This was the case, for example, when the ACN attempted to engage the second phase of North American

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[17] della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 162.

[18] Hanspeter Kriesi, "The Organizational Structure of New Social Movements in a Political Context," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilization Structure and Cultural Framing*, ed. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 155. Kriesi sets out parameters to evaluate the degree of "internal structuration" of an SMO. These include the formalization of structures, rules and procedures, professionalization, and internal differentiation.

free trade on two fronts – campaigning for FTA abrogation at home and against NAFTA's implementation abroad. In the end, the domestic campaign was overshadowed.

Second, stalled structural development constrained an evolving common discourse. Leo Panitch has suggested that coalitions such as the PCN/ACN have been largely limited to a form of elite accommodation politics – "popular front–style strategic networking between the top leaderships of the various organizations."[19] On the evidence presented here Panitch's contention is too strong though far from wrongheaded. Grassroots participation in the activities and decision-making of the PCN/ACN was enhanced with the inclusion of provincial coalitions. Moreover, some member groups made serious efforts to involve their members in coalition work and engage in political education. Most notable in this regard were the exchanges of workers and social activists organized by Canadian unions, church groups and others with their Mexican counterparts. Still, the advancing consensus produced through coalition activities remained relatively rarefied and might very well have been deepened more evenly by stronger mechanisms for representation and accountability within the Network. Indeed such processes would, at a minimum, help to ensure an internal level playing field given the dramatic discrepancy in power and resources between participating SMOs. Not surprisingly, the smaller, resource-poor national groups as well as provincial coalitions tended to favour initiatives to enhance participation including pooled travel costs.

Both in its engagement with trade liberalization and on other issues, the PCN/ACN's discourse advanced beyond a shared critique of neo-liberal policy initiatives. Movement to movement relationships with Mexican free trade opponents provided additional incentive for a shift in the Network's discourse on trade towards the articulation of alternatives. Similarly, on the GST and in the constitutional debates, the PCN/ACN played either a direct or indirect role in developing and

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[19] Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, "The Political Legacy of the Manifesto," in *The Socialist Register 1998* (UK: Merlin Press, 1998), 22.

advancing alternatives to the policies being put forward by the state and promoted by the corporate sector. As it added the formulation of alternatives to its contestation, the Network adopted a deeper critique of political-economic structures and named a broader opponent – i.e., the corporate agenda – in its discourse. Yet, the Network's critique of Westminster-style representative democracy remained underdeveloped, and this despite at least two significant opportunities: the Mulroney government's unprecedented stacking of the unelected Senate in order to insure passage of GST legislation, and engagement with the constitutional debate.

While the PCN/ACN's discourse can be said to have grown towards a nascent anti-capitalist perspective, the defence of the Canadian KWS that remained at its centre complicated this trajectory. The high priority accorded to defensive struggles around state programs may also help to explain the Network's lack of emphasis on democratic reform; the additional complexity of binational federalism, reflected in proposals for "asymmetrical federalism" was also a mitigating factor here. Finally, the broader "political economy frame of injustice" that appears to have been so dominant in the popular sector may, somewhat ironically, have served to reduce the importance attached to more 'narrowly political' reforms. In any case, the Network was arguably most effective when its campaigns were constructed around the broadest possible basis of unity and initially defensive objectives (e.g. against the FTA and the GST).

4. Claims and Contributions

The general hypothesis that an approach combining the strengths of a variety of different analytical frameworks would best explain the formation and development of the PCN/ACN has been assessed in this paper.[20] This study underlines the importance of a holistic approach, consideration of both structure and agency, as well as a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between them. Specifically, it

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[20] Meyer and Rochon argue "each analytical framework is constructed to throw light on a particular aspect of a social or political protest." David S. Meyer and Thomas Rochon, "Toward a Coalitional Theory," in *Coalitions and Political Movements: The Lessons of the Nuclear Freeze*, ed. David S. Meyer and Thomas Rochon (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1997), 250.

reaffirms the value of a political economy analysis without accepting a 'transmission belt' relationship between economic structures and social phenomena. The PCN/ACN and the Canada-U.S. FTA can best be understood against the background of political responses to structural contradictions and economic crisis as the era of the postwar KWS ended.

A political economy lens brings into focus the most evident example of the importance of Canadian specificity in the emergence of the PCN/ACN. Canada's relationship with its powerful neighbour to the south – economic, political and cultural – spurred the rise of a nationalist movement in the 1970s and 1980s along with a nationalist discourse with historical roots and broad public resonance. Together, nationalist movement and discourse would provide a necessary, if insufficient, foundation for the subsequent cross-movement mobilization against the FTA. Similarly, the organizational and ideological character of the women's and labour movements – two key elements in the narrative of the popular sector and PCN/ACN – were both shaped by Canada's proximity to the United States. The presence of a social democratic political party – limited by rather weaker ideological and popular roots than its European cousins – should also be noted here. Finally, and critically, the formation of the Pro-Canada Network came in reaction to proposals for a bilateral free trade agreement between Canada and the U.S. As the centrepiece of the Canadian neo-liberal response to economic crisis, free trade wove nationalist themes together with the grievances and demands of popular sector groups.

Other aspects of the specific Canadian context also appear as important variables in this account of the PCN/ACN. While the constraints imposed by geographic expanse seem self-evident, other related factors carried more contradictory implications. For example, the binational state added to complexity and divisions among popular sector groups, yet may have contributed to a general understanding of the importance of the negotiated partnerships essential for coalition formation. Similarly, the Canadian state's federal structure opens the door to intergovernmental

decision-making that is increasingly distant from popular contestation, while, the replication of this federal structure within SMOs "may inhibit effective concerted action by all members of the group across territorial boundaries."[21] Still, once again, this additional complexity of state structures might lead to a more propitious political opportunity structure, with different levels of government as potential allies for movements, as well as creating internal checks and balances that could contribute to the necessary process of democratizing a cross-movement coalition such as the PCN/ACN.

In spite of its strengths, political economy suffers from a general silence on the question of agency. A neo-Gramscian framework serves as a helpful corrective to this quiescence and to the confusion on the question of agency within NMT. Despite attention to discourse and identity formation and Laclau and Mouffe's concept of 'chains of equivalence,' which, exceptionally within this framework, takes a step towards rearticulating diverse identities, the emphasis on difference within NMT seems particularly inappropriate in light of the evidence in this account. Notwithstanding many twists and turns, the development of the Canadian popular sector highlights continuity, unity and convergence of interests and identities, as well as movements and organizations. It is tempting to suggest that this pattern is a reflection of the specific types of social movements and organizations involved. However, in their study of social movement activists in Vancouver, Carroll and Ratner found not only that a "political economy master frame of injustice" was "by far the most prevalent" used by their subjects but that this was also the case for gay/lesbian activists, a group most NMT literature tends to associate with identity politics.[22] The political economy master frame included assumptions that power is systemic and that power structures are articulated with each other entailing, according to the authors, a "broadly socialist political sensibility."[23]

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[21] Miriam Smith, "Interest Groups and Social Movements," 182.

[22] Carroll and Ratner, "Master Frames and Counterhegemony: Political Sensibilities in Contemporary Social Movements," 417.

[23] Ibid.: 416.

Like Carroll and Ratner's conclusions, this assessment of the PCN/ACN provides support for an analytical perspective that maintains an attentive eye to the role of class. Both in its organizational and its discursive development, the PCN/ACN draws attention to the continuing importance of the organized working class – i.e., the labour movement. Labour's key role in the Network was certainly aided by what are in North American terms relatively high levels of unionization, political education and activism. More generally though, despite recent hard times, the level of organization and consequent potential for mobilization achieved by trade unions remains matched by few other SMOs. Finally and more fundamentally, beyond its subordinate position within capitalist social relations, it is the position of potential power the working class occupies by virtue of its ability to withdraw labour power that guarantees its crucial place in any potentially transformative political project, let alone any effective social movement coalition.[24]

The importance of elite divisions, alignment instability and the presence of allies in the political sphere to the emergence of the PCN affirm the value of the political process variant of RMT, albeit with some limitations.[25] The case of the Pro-Canada Network also indicates that changes to the political opportunity structure affect the degree to which coalition participants pursue internal rather than collective objectives. After 1988, without the pressure of an impending electoral contest that would likely determine the fate of the FTA, the competing urgency of the specific demands facing each movement and SMO was reinforced. This was particularly the case given the combination of an economic downturn and the systematic implementation of a range of neo-liberal policy measures that impacted directly on specific SMOs (e.g. funding to women's groups) and on their constituencies (e.g. cuts to Unemployment Insurance coverage and benefits).

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[24] Panitch, "The Impasse of Social Democratic Politics," 24; Bleyer, "The New Realism: A Socialist Response to the Crisis in Britain," 84.

[25] In Chapter 7 above I point out the weakness of this approach when it comes to understanding the relationship between the popular sector/PCN and the NDP.

Resource Mobilization Theory's micro-level focus on movement organization and activity also proved useful for this case study, which, in turn, supports some of the central arguments elaborated in RMT literature. First, the development of the Canadian popular sector, and out of it the formation of the PCN, underline the continuity in social movements both across movements and over time. From the reinforcing waves of the women's movement, represented, for example, in evolving feminist organizations such as NAC, to the relative similarities of perspective and organizational structure between the key social movement sectors that together formed the PCN/ACN, continuity far more than rupture has marked the Canadian social movement scene. Moreover, like Carroll and Ratner's work on master framing, the evidence here does not support the notion of a dramatic break between the practices of so-called 'old' movements such as the labour movement and new social movements. Canadian social movements, both new and old, are for the most part engaged on a terrain that includes interaction with the state as well as activity within state structures themselves in the defence of acquired rights and to make new gains.

Second, beyond identifying continuity, a focus on organizational detail leads to an emphasis on linkages between movements which is reflected in a series of concepts elaborated in the literature including, social networks, multi-organizational fields, and alliance systems. By tracing the roots of the PCN/ACN in earlier popular sector developments as well as considering three key sectors in some detail, this study has underlined the importance of personal and organizational relationships, including 'multiple affiliations' of activists, to successful social movement alliances. Specifically, the existence of "solidarity links which have already been activated" facilitated both the Network's formation and its further development.[26] In addition, in keeping with the implications of Carroll and Ratner's study of activists in British Columbia, the hypothesized importance of the "relative stability of solidarity links

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[26] della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 131.

based on previous shared experiences *or on adhesion to certain visions of the world* [emphasis mine]" is sustained by this study.[27]

While this account of the PCN/ACN affirms the value of Resource Mobilization Theory's emphasis on organizational linkages, it directly challenges the narrow economistic rationale for coalition formation identified in the few RMT studies of this phenomenon.[28] Outside of more recent developments in frame interpretation, RMT's focus on material resources leads it to miss the critical question of consciousness. Yet, the attention to structures and resources within this approach is ultimately important to the task; resources are necessary not only for mobilization but also, in the case of a coalition of organizations that bridges different movements, for the creation of the organizational space where interaction takes place laying the basis for ongoing discursive and political convergence.

Thus placed in context, RMT's overriding emphasis on resource maximization also proves useful in interpreting the PCN/ACN experience. It can be argued, for example, that participation in the Network created opportunities for SMOs to maximize resources. However meagre, the collective resource base of the Network allowed less well-resourced groups to participate in campaigns and take more effective stands on issues that might otherwise have been beyond their reach. A more complete picture of the maximization process can be drawn with a broader definition of resources. For larger trade unions, at whose expense the collective financial and material resource base of the Network was largely achieved, the maximization of less tangible resources is a benefit.[29] They gain access to more extensive communication and research networks, a deeper pool of skills and experience in these areas, and a broader base of support for their own sectoral struggles.

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[27] Ibid., 133.

[28] See Hathaway and Meyer, "Competition and Cooperation in Social Movement Coalitions: Lobbying for Peace in the 1980s."

[29] Klandermans, "Linking the "Old" and "New": Movement Networks in the Netherlands."

Beyond expanding the range of resources being maximized, the ACN was engaged in the more or less explicit and direct redistribution of resources within the popular sector. The scope of this redistribution was restricted by the limits of the Network's democratic development as in the relatively informal and erratic pay-what-you-can membership fee 'structure' that provided the bulk of the Network's operating budget and the contribution of in-kind services.

This is perhaps an appropriate juncture at which to consider the value of the distinctly Canadian descriptive term 'popular sector' as an analytical concept. The constituencies identified by Drache and Cameron as part of the popular sector engage in discursive struggle initially through a series of relatively *ad hoc* relationships, both organizational and personal, and later in more formal relationships which are themselves issue of this struggle. As they form coalitions around single issues and, at times, on the basis of a broader common agenda, these actors engage in the definition and redefinition of their own social and political identities and discourses, *as well as* the collective identity and discourse of these specific moments of convergence and of the popular sector as a whole. An emerging and evolving common discourse combined with developing personal and institutional relationships lays the basis for yet further identity formation and for collective action.

Defining the space collectively occupied by social movements and their organizations as the popular sector draws attention to linkages and continuity. Nevertheless, a framework that aspires to predict the outcome and understand the scope and complexity of coalition formation must also be informed by the micro-level focus of organizational theory. A similar nomenclature alone is not sufficient to imbue the popular sector concept with the elements of organizational theory that allow the RMT approach to highlight the structure of agency thus drawing attention to the *contingent nature of the development of agency.*

Conversely, neither the formation nor the further development of the PCN/ACN can be understood without reference to the critical variable of

consciousness – a major deficiency of RMT. The ideological commitment to a broader emancipatory project that has imbued a long history of socialist and radical theories and practices was a key feature of the Canadian popular sector. Moving beyond both the limited rational choice conception of resource maximization and crass Marxian economism as the sole relevant calculations of collective action means going further than a politicized definition of self-interest. Contrary to the atomized identities and discourses implied in much of New Movement Theory, the discourse and policy positions of many popular sector groups include explicit commitments to broader emancipatory goals for their own constituencies *as well as for others.*[30]

This account supports the contention that a whole system perspective linked to a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between agency and structure offers the best prospect for analyzing contemporary social movement coalitions. More broadly, Carroll suggests a Gramscian reinterpretation of political economy that "may be said to mediate between abstract structures of capital and concrete instances of agency" and, consequently, generates an analysis of the transformation of capital and consent, as well as an appraisal of "the opportunities that these changes present for emancipatory movements."[31]

The value of a neo-Gramscian framework for the task of assessing a coalition of social movements is reflected in the fact that projections for the PCN/ACN's ability to weather a re-mandating process and its longer-term survival were most accurately made from this perspective (e.g. Mahon and Carroll). The combination of attention to structure, agency, and their interaction, as well as openness to discursive issues, proves particularly valuable for understanding the PCN/ACN.[32] Furthermore, the neo-Gramscian insistence on the specific nature of counterhegemony as rooted in

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[30] See Chapters 1 and 3. This assessment is reinforced through Carroll and Ratner's elaboration of the political economy master frame.

[31] Carroll, "Restructuring Capital, Reorganizing Consent: Gramsci, Political Economy and Canada," 393, 90.

[32] The neo-Gramscian approach is less prone to the dramatic polar opposites (i.e., reform/revolution, structure/agency, macro/micro, movement/institution, state/civil society) that tend to be drawn in other frameworks. Boggs, *Social Movements and Political Power*, 19.

a material base of social – i.e., extra-discursive – conditions, is highly preferable to the more open-ended discourse-theoretical interpretation.[33] The counterhegemonic project is thus safeguarded from the excessive enthusiasm generated in a less than fully elaborated and explicitly normative popular sector concept. Indeed, Jenson suggests the popular sector consensus remained "underdeveloped and defensive" and therefore cannot be considered a "clearly articulated paradigm for future social relations."[34]

Despite the limits to the popular sector's discourse there is evidence to substantiate Drache and Cameron's claim that a universalistic concern for social justice emerged out of the practices of the movements involved.[35] This account of the PCN/ACN indicates that coalition practices were equally influential in producing this convergence. The collective spaces created out of the popular sector appear to have contributed to the transformation of existing movements. Offe and Wiesenthal's suggestion that the main task of social movements is, in fact, the "discursive formation of preferences and identities which transforms the consciousness of isolated social actors into a collective or general will" seems particularly apposite to coalition formation.[36] As Adkins argues in her study of coalition work between trade unionists and environmentalists in Southern Ontario, "it is also in the context of alliances with other oppressed social groups that union leaders and members come to develop more radical critiques of capitalist society and more coherent visions of a different world."[37] Certainly the important influence of feminist principles and organizational

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[33] Carroll and Ratner, "Between Leninism and Radical Pluralism: Gramscian Reflections on Counterhegemony and the New Social Movements," 20.

[34] Jenson, "All the World's a Stage: Ideas, Spaces and Times in Canadian Political Economy," 65.

[35] Drache and Cameron, eds., *The Other MacDonald Report.*

[36] Claus Offe, "Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics: Social Movements Since the 1960s," *Social Research* 54, no. 4, Winter (1985): 183. Scott adds that this process also takes place within collective action and "not merely as an exogenous variable." Scott, *Ideology and the New Social Movements*, 122.

[37] Laurie Elizabeth Adkins, "The Prospects for Eco-Socialist Convergence" (Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, Queen's University, 1989), 32.

styles on other movements over the course of the 1970s and 1980s is a notable characteristic of the Canadian popular sector.[38]

Moreover, the evolution of the Network's mandate and the collective discourse it adopted supports the notion that the various sectoral movements were converging towards anti-capitalist and pro-democratic values. This observation also reinforces claims regarding the unifying effect of capitalism's increasingly totalizing dynamic, an argument of increasing relevance as a global movement around anti-capitalist/anti-globalization themes takes hold at the beginning of a new century.[39]

Notwithstanding its various strengths, a neo-Gramscian framework built around the conception of counterhegemony remains limited as a tool for the evaluation of specific instances of movement convergence such as the PCN/ACN. As employed by Carroll and Ratner, the master frame concept with its roots in RMT provides an empirical basis for evaluating counterhegemonic potential or, as they themselves put it, a "cognitive aspect of counterhegemonic politics."[40] Still, master framing alone cannot completely correct the macro-level abstraction a neo-Gramscian framework is prone to. The specific micro-level strengths of RMT with its attention to organizational forms, structures and processes allow for an equally critical focus on the *structure of agency.*

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[38] Among others, see Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal, and Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (London: Merlin, 1980); Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change;* Chapter 1 in Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle, *Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women;* Jo Freeman, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," in *Women in Politics*, ed. Jane Jacquette (New York: John Wiley, 1974); Maroney and Luxton, eds., *Feminism and Political Economy: Women's Work, Women's Struggle;* and White, *Mail and Female: Women and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.*

[39] See Chapter 2 above. See for example Rustin, "Absolute Voluntarism: Critique of a Post-Marxist Concept of Hegemony"; and Frank Cunningham, "Radical Philosophy and the New Social Movements," in *The Real World of Democracy Revisited and Other Essays in Democracy and Socialism*, ed. Frank Cunningham (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1994), 125. Others have argued that these anti-capitalist and indeed proto-socialist ideals are amply present within the 'new movements' and 'identity politics.' See for example Carroll and Ratner, "Master Frames and Counterhegemony: Political Sensibilities in Contemporary Social Movements," 426-27 and Barry Adam and Alan Sears, *Experiencing HIV, Personal, Family and Work Relationships* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[40] Carroll and Ratner, "Master Frames and Counterhegemony: Political Sensibilities in Contemporary Social Movements," 412.

Taken as a whole, the experience of the Canadian popular sector and the PCN/ACN poses a direct challenge to the standard pluralist assumption that "only parties can aggregate disparate interests around common purposes, forcing single-issue groups to take into account other viewpoints and considerations."[41] Nevertheless, this account of the PCN/ACN also draws attention to very real limitations facing coalitions of social movements as they attempt to hold together a confluence of actors, let alone try to lead a convergence of interests and agendas that might constitute adequate agency or a counterhegemonic project.[42]

In the context of societies whose political organization revolves around institutions of representative democracy, it would be foolish in the extreme to ignore the importance of the political party and its functions. However, the relationship between movement and party is too often rendered as a stark polarity of points at either end of a continuum of institutionalization. Much like the equally reductionist class/party relation posed within Marxism, this simplistic categorization obscures more than it illuminates.

As Dalton argues, "the most direct challenge to the political order by the new movements lies in the entry of movement parties into electoral competition."[43] In fact this 'new' form of political agency (i.e., the movement-party) also poses a test for the polarized conception of the movement/party relationship. In the Canadian context, first-past-the-post elections made the emergence of a movement/party on the model of the European Green parties of the 1980s far less likely. Nonetheless, an interesting parallel, if less bold, claim might be made on behalf of the PCN/ACN: that the emergence of a broad coalition of social movements in the form of the Network might have re-instituted the movement-party dynamic present at the formative stage of most

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[41] G. Grant Amyot, "Democracy Without Parties: A New Politics?" in *Canadian Parties in Transition*, ed. Brian A. Tanguay and Alain G. Gagnon (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1996), 528.

[42] Miliband, Panitch, and Saville, "Problems and Promise of Socialist Renewal."

[43] Russell J. Dalton and Manfred Kuechler, "New Social Movements and the Political Order: Inducing Change or Long Term Stability?" in *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*, ed. Russell J. Dalton and Manfred Kuechler, *Europe and the International Order* (London: Polity Press, 1990), 297.

social democratic parties.[44] Of course, in the case of the PCN/ACN the movement was both formally non-partisan and structurally fully independent from the party. Although this critical distinction might have provided the movement with important opportunities and protected it from absorption into a narrower parliamentary-electoral sphere, it likely also compromised its capacity to transform the NDP. Still, just as the electoral system made a movement-party an unlikely endeavour, the tableau of political responses to social and economic crisis beginning in the late 1960s, layered on top of postwar social, economic and political developments, shaped a terrain where only some political projects would be possible.[45]

While the way out of the crisis of political agency facing the Canadian Left remains less than entirely clear, a basic precondition for its resolution is surely acceptance of the "irreducible tension" between the politics of movement mobilization and the quest for 'state power.'[46] This by no means implies abandoning the pursuit of a mechanism that combines the social engagement and style of movement action with the "necessarily instrumental concerns of winning, securing and administering political power."[47]

5. Future Directions

It is perhaps inevitable that this account of the formation and development of the Pro-Canada/Action Canada Network has produced more questions than answers.

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[44] As Bottomore points out, "in the case of socialist parties... the party was very largely an extension of an existing mass movement into the sphere of electoral politics." Bottomore, *Political Sociology*. I have suggested this point regarding the ACN and the NDP elsewhere. Bleyer, "Coalitions of Social Movements as Agencies for Social Change: the Action Canada Network," 147.

[45] Phillips discusses the limited recent Canadian experience with movement parties. These single- issue parties (i.e. green or feminist) were either extremely short-lived or electorally insignificant, or both. Susan D. Phillips, "Competing, Connecting, and Complementing: Parties, Interest Groups and New Social Movements," in *Canadian Parties in Transition*, ed. Brian A. Tanguay and Alain G. Gagnon (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1996).

[46] Poulantzas refers to « une certaine tension irreductible entre les partis ouvriers et les mouvements sociaux. » Nicos Poulantzas, *Repères: Hier et aujourd'hui* (Paris: François Maspero, 1980).

[47] Boggs, *Social Movements and Political Power*, 78. In this same vein Hall suggests "the necessary tension in the contradictory relationship between civil society and the state is what socialist pluralism in a real democracy will be like." Hall, "Face the Future," 39.

Nevertheless, some important lessons can be drawn on the basis of arguments presented here.

Academics seeking to understand and predict the outcome of cross-movement coalition formation should equip their analytical toolboxes with care. While this paper makes a strong case for a synthesis of macro and micro-level theory, it also suggests that elements of certain analytical approaches should be handled with great care if not avoided entirely. This includes New Movement Theory with its reification of difference against agency, obsession with discourse at the expense of structure, and failure to recognize the continuing importance of class. Of course, a perspective that privileges class at the expense of all other social cleavages proves equally problematic, as does the 'rational choice' calculus within Resource Mobilization Theory and interest group theory. In this last case, a stark movement/institution dualism and a simplistic understanding of social mobilization compound the damage.

At the macro-level, the political process model probes too superficially given the deep context necessary in order to assess social forces and their prospects in a given conjuncture. Meanwhile, political economy, though it does allow for the depth of background needed to understand conjuncture, fails to give due weight to the question of agency.

Some signposts for future attempts at cross-movement coalition building can also be drawn from the experience of the Pro-Canada/Action Canada Network. The emergence of the PCN/ACN out of the Canadian popular sector points to the potential for social movement convergence leading to the construction of adequate agency. At the same time, the extraordinary conjunction of factors that allowed for the Network's formation and evolution underlines the important and perhaps insurmountable obstacles to such a project, as does the ACN's eventual decline.

Beyond the obvious conclusion that those advancing such an undertaking must proceed with premeditation and be prepared to 'seize the moment,' a number of

tensions require attention. This account of the PCN/ACN has highlighted the critical importance of leadership in the construction of social movement alliances. More precisely, it identifies a form of leadership that balances the facilitation of consensus essential to fashion and maintain unity with the drive for convergence. This implies the active management of consensus to avoid a lowest-common denominator cul-de-sac making use of the coalition as a space for the formation of social identities and discursive struggle. A second, related, balance must be found between the initial inevitably defensive stance of movements and their interests as they coalesce, and the articulation of an alternative discourse essential to convergence. Third, continuing structural development must be a priority even in the face of opposition from member SMOs in order to create some independent organizational capacity, as well as to address the key variables of representation and accountability. The tension, in this instance, is between avoiding a process-induced paralysis while, at the same time, evading an equally immobilizing crisis of legitimacy.

Areas for research to further contribute to the investigation of the potential of cross-movement coalitions are relatively easy to identify. First, the timeline of this study of the PCN/ACN could be extended to cover the period from 1994 to its renaming as the Solidarity Network and *de facto* dissolution as a functioning coalition with a shared program of action in 1997. Second, given the multiplication of trade and other international agreements that condense a broader neo-liberal social and economic agenda, the continuing importance of these agreements for Canadian and global social movement politics should be considered. Alliances, often including many of the same groups that made up the membership of the PCN/ACN, were formed in the case of campaigns around the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). But these alliances appear to have fallen far short of the scale of endeavour represented by the Network. Instead, the central role previously played by the ACN/PCN was assumed by some of its one-time member SMOs, specifically, the Council of Canadians and the Canadian Labour Congress. While the CLC's

leadership role is not surprising, the development of the Council of Canadians into a citizens' organization with 100,000 members and a broad radicalized mandate is worthy of note. The contrasting trajectories of the Council and the Network, i.e., the decline of a cross-movement coalition and the flourishing of an SMO with general public membership, might provide further evidence of the difficulty of multi-issue coalition formation and convergence despite the continuing travails of social democratic electoralism and party politics in general. In fact, the downturn in the fortunes of the New Democratic Party continued through to the end of the decade with two more poor performances at the polls in 1997 and 2000, at which point the Council of Canadians could claim a larger membership than the party.[48]

In addition to a longer timeline, this study of the PCN/ACN would be further complemented by research on a larger number of the coalition's member SMOs. Not least among these would be the Council of Canadians focusing both on its participation in the Network and on the relationship between its improving fortunes and the latter's decline. More attention might also be paid to the various provincial coalitions and sectors beyond those emphasized in this account. Provincial coalitions are particularly interesting because they constitute regionally specific microcosms of the broader Network and can, to some extent, serve as comparators. Popular sector developments before the formation of the PCN draw attention to the transformative impact of cross-movement discursive struggle, this examination could further assess the impact of PCN/ACN participation on member SMOs – focusing on their own organizational capacity, the breadth of their discourse and mandate, and any change in their approach to the question of political agency.

Finally, the PCN/ACN's engagement with NAFTA raises the subject of cross-national social movement alliances, as well as the "cross-national diffusion of protest."[49] Evidence of sharing and learning between movements in the North

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[48] Both elections confirmed the decline of interest in party politics with record low levels of voter turnout. Brian A. Tanguay, "Canada's Party System in the 1990s: Breakdown or Renewal?" in *Canadian Politics*, ed. James Bickerton and Alain G. Gagnon (Toronto: Broadview Press, 1999), 325.

[49] See chapter 8 in Hanspeter Kriesi, Ruud Koopmans, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and Marco G. Giugni,

American case is reinforced by the experience of global campaigns against the MAI and the WTO. Furthermore, while the PCN/ACN was relatively unique as a cross-movement mobilization around trade and investment, the subsequent development of campaigns around NAFTA, the MAI, and WTO in other national formations raises the prospect of cross-national comparisons, as well as contributing to the understanding of cross-national diffusion.

This course of inquiry would add to the burgeoning academic attention to "global civil society," "transnational social movement organizations," "transnational advocacy networks," "global social movements" and "globalization from below."[50] Meanwhile, it is tempting to extrapolate somewhat from this account of the PCN/ACN. There can be little doubt that many challenges facing coalition formation 'in one country' would be magnified at the transnational and global level. Relatively straightforward concerns include the logistical barriers posed by distance and jurisdictions, as well as the need to generate resources to meet high costs. Differing perspectives between North and South and other cleavages will put the strains of Canadian binational federalism into proper perspective. The tension between the defensive logic of coalition formation and attempts to advance alternatives is also likely to present an even greater challenge at this level. Recent debates and schisms in the 'anti-globalization' movement – for example, over the question of violence – may

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New Social Movements in Western Europe: a Comparative Analysis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); J. Craig Jenkins, "Social Movements, Political Representation, and the State: An Agenda and Comparative Framework," in *The Politics of Social Protest; Comparative Perspectives on States and Social Movements*, ed. Bert Klandermans and J. Craig Jenkins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); and Donatella della Porta and Hanspeter Kriesi, "Social Movements in a Globalizing World: an Introduction," in *Social Movements in a Globalizing World*, ed. Donatella della Porta, Hanspeter Kriesi, and Dieter Rucht (New York: St. Martin's, 1999).

[50] For global civil society, see Kaldor, "'Civilizing' Globalization? The Implications of the 'Battle in Seattle'"; for transnational social movement organizations, see della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*; for transnational advocacy networks, see Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., *Activists Beyond Borders* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998); for globalization from below, see Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, and Brendan Smith, *Globalization From Below: the Power of Solidarity*. (Cambridge, Mass: South End Press, 2000); and for Global Social Movements, see Robin Cohen and Shirin M. Rai, eds., *Global Social Movements* (London: The Athlone Press, 2000). For a more critical view of the potential for transnational solidarity, see Andre C. Drainville, "The Fetishism of Global Civil Society: Global Governance, Transnational Urbanism and Sustainable Capitalism in the World Economy," in *Transnationalism from Below*, ed. Michael Peter Smith and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo, *Comparative Urban and Community Research* (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 1998).

be an indication of the extremely difficult task of maintaining unity over tactics, let alone constructing a consensus around an alternative project at the global level. Finally, the difficulty in developing a structured agency that can deal with the issues of representation and accountability at the national level will clearly be amplified.

This largely nationally focused account of collective contestation of trade liberalization might also serve as a helpful corrective to an apparent fixation with global and cross-national activity both in social practice and in academic inquiry. The continuing relevance of the nation state has been vigorously argued against the globalization thesis that has dominated the past decade.[51] Insofar as there has been a process of deregulation at the global level, this process has been aided, abetted and enforced by nation states.[52] Moreover, any future regulation at the global level will succeed "because the major nation states agree to create it and to confer legitimacy on it by pooling sovereignty."[53] At the same time, as Rucht points out, as a result of the "limited power of international institutions, transnational movements continue to consider national governments as important and, in many cases, even primary targets."[54] In a contribution to the same volume, Koopmans ends a cross-national comparison of social movement mobilization with the conclusion:

> As long as nation-states remain the most important actors on the international stage and the dominant frame of reference for political debates, this situation is not likely to change... a New World Order is still more fiction than fact.[55]

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[51] The literature on globalization – too vast to note here – is summarized in Held, David, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999). Prominent "sceptics" include contributions to Robert Boyer and Daniel Drache, eds., *States against Markets* (London: Routledge, 1996), and Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, *Globalization in Question* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

[52] Panitch argues that "there is a tendency to ignore the extent to which today's globalisation both is authored by states and is primarily about reorganizing, rather then by-passing, states." Leo Panitch, "Globalisation and the State," in *Socialist Register 1994: Between Globalism and Nationalism*, ed. Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch (London: The Merlin Press, 1994), 63. Surely the neo-liberal policy straightjacket adopted by many governments should be added to the list of causes of the declining legitimacy of liberal democratic institutions. Clearly, what in many cases amounts to a 'unilateral disarmament' by the state has contributed to cynicism regarding the value of representative democracy.

[53] Paul Hirst, *From Statism to Pluralism: Democracy, Civil Society and Global Politics* (London: UCL Press, 1997), 239.

[54] Dieter Rucht, "The Transnationalization of Social Movements: Trends, Causes, Problems," In *Social Movements in a Globalizing World*, ed. Donatella Della Porta, Hanspeter Kriesi and Dieter Rucht (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 209.

[55] Ruud Koopmans, "Globalization or Still National Politics? A Comparison of Protests against the

In any case, the argument in favour of retaining the nation state as a focal point does not rest on a sceptical stance in the debate on economic globalization. The national project remains an essential building block for any wider, inevitably more fragile, international or global venture. Constructing counterhegemony or adequate agency at the global level is an unlikely enough endeavour in the first instance, without a firm foundation at the national level it becomes a chimera.

Gulf War in Germany, France, and the Netherlands, " in *Social Movements in a Globalizing World*, ed. Donatella della Porta, Hanspeter Kriesi and Dieter Rucht (New York: St. Martin's, 1999) 70.

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